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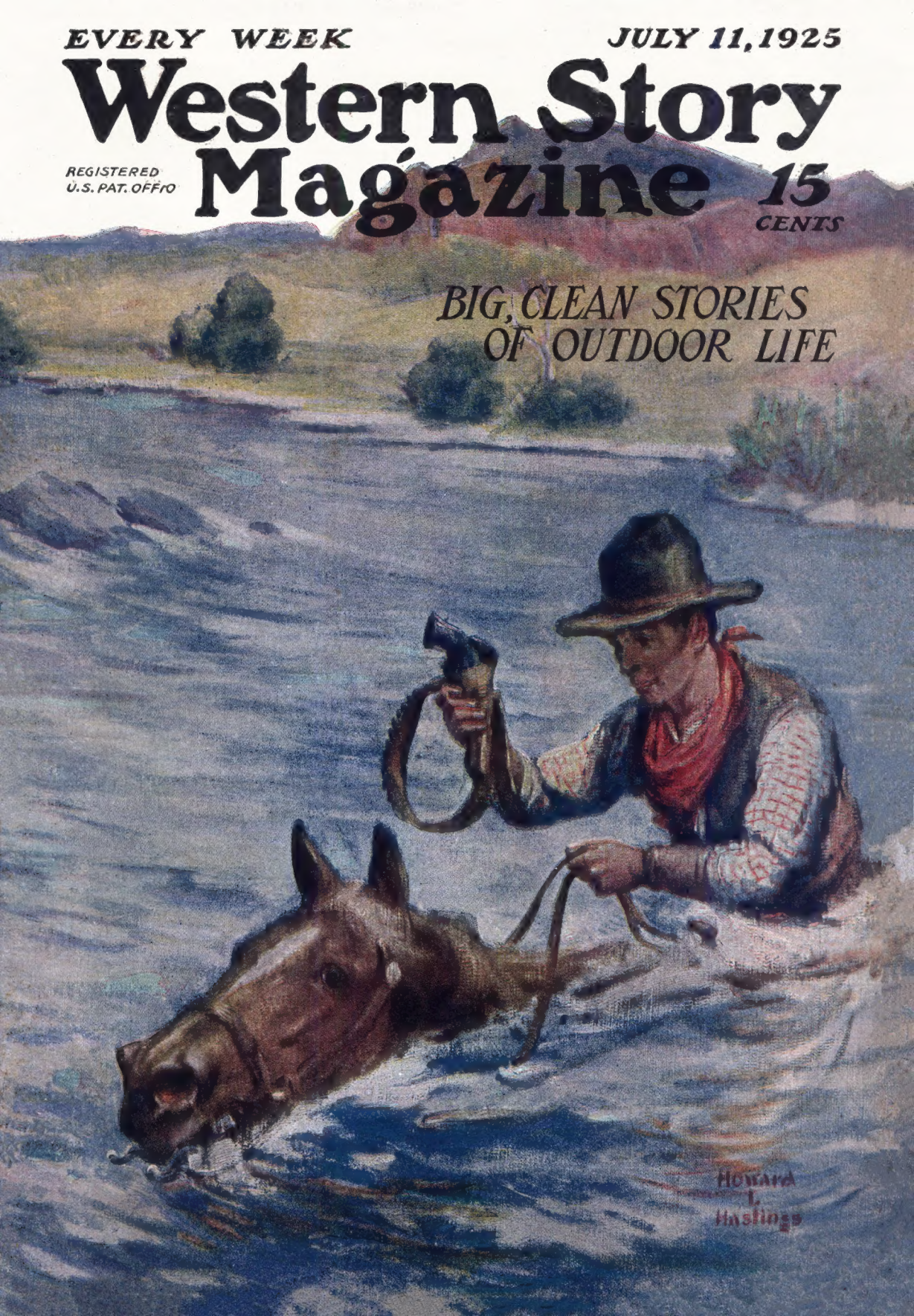

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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LIII JULY 11, 1925 No. 3

Lennister of Blue Dome

By Robert J. Horton

Author of "Raiders of Blue Dome Range," etc.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUTH DECLARES HIMSELF.

A CROWD was gathering in front of the Rodeo Palace of refreshment and amusement. Yellow gleams of lamplight, streaming from the windows of the resort, cast a weird hue on bronzed faces and brought the sea of bobbing, broad-brimmed hats into bold relief. Men were hurrying toward the spot from up and down the short, dusty street. Strains of music came from the dance hall nearly opposite the resort. Overhead the swimming stars looked coldly down upon Ransford, nestling among the weaving cottonwoods, wildly responding to its annual *"Grand Decoration Day Celebration and Ball—Don't Miss It."*

Evidently something not on the program was taking place in front of the Rodeo. There were loud and excited voices and harsh laughs.

"Go to it, kid; you're the boy that can do it!" cheered a lanky cow-puncher, swinging his hat.

A dark, swarthy-skinned young fellow, with an eye unnaturally bright, swung on his heels in the center of the admiring circle and scowled.

"Who said that?" he demanded, jerking off his hat as if he would throw it on the ground, roll up his silk shirt-sleeves, and annihilate the speaker on the spot.

"Tear into it, Claude," came the voice

from somewhere in the throng. "The Bar Cross is a dozen strong behind you!"

The youth peered about with a menacing look, returned his hat to his head, swayed just enough so that one could notice it, and then spoke again.

"I don't need no dozen Bar Cross tipplings behind me when I'm on personal business," he declared a bit thickly.

There was a laugh at this; but it was a laugh of the slap-on-the-back variety. The Bar Cross men were not going to antagonize the son of Frank Graham, owner of the ranch, and their "old man" —not by a long shot.

"We're with you, anyway," said one of the men agreeably.

Claude Graham was mollified. Tipping his hat at a rakish angle, he started through the throng in the direction of the dance hall. A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"Where you goin', son?" came a deep voice gruffly.

The youth whirled. "None of your business, Trope," he said hotly. "All you can do for me is to tell this locoed bunch to lay off me, see?"

"I said, where are you goin'?" The tone was harsh now, and the big man who spoke gazed sternly out of small, brownish-green eyes from beneath bushy, red brows which seemed set in a perpetual frown.

The boy's aggressiveness wavered. "Oh, all right, Trope. I suppose you got to act as my guardian so long's dad isn't here." His sneer died on his thin lips. "I'm going over to dance with the queen of the Triangle," he declared belligerently. "Got any objections?"

"No—sure not," said Trope, turning away. "Go ahead."

Claude Graham continued toward the dance hall almost unnoticed, for most of the members of the crowd looked after the big man—a bulky, bullish figure that plunged straight ahead toward the swinging doors of the Rodeo. Most of the Bar Cross cow-punchers followed him.

"Keeps track of the kid, doesn't he?" spoke a jovial spirit in the throng.

"Old Graham's orders, of course," said another. "Graham thinks a lot of that youngster. Wonder he wouldn't tell Trope to keep him out of the Rodeo. Be better for him."

The crowd thinned, but many followed to the open doors of the dance hall to see whether Claude Graham would have the nerve to carry out his purpose to dance with Connie Cameron, daughter of Will Cameron, owner of the famous Triangle, the largest and best-stocked ranch in the Blue Dome country.

There was a group about the doors inside the hall, but Claude pushed his way through and stood for a few minutes blinking in the glare of the many lights before the reflectors along the sides of the big room. A dance was in progress, and he watched the moving couples until finally he glimpsed a face beneath a wealth of gold-spun hair. His eyes burned, and he shifted on his feet. When the dance was over, he hurried a bit unsteadily to where Connie Cameron sat down on a bench on the right side of the hall, admirers flocking to ask for a dance.

The girl's face was a bit flushed from the exercise, her eyes glowed and sparkled with youthful excitement. It was plain that she was happy.

Dances were not frequent in Ransford, county seat of Blue Dome. It was a big range—all cattle—and the men could not be spared from their work. Only after the fall round-up and the beef cattle were shipped and the hands paid off, did every one join in a general period of festivity—the rodeo. So Connie and the other girls of the Blue Dome range welcomed these few opportunities for meeting each other and enjoying themselves in town.

But Connie Cameron's look of joy faded as Claude Graham came up with

an arrogant swagger and, bowing low, addressed her in a tone of excessive familiarity.

"Good evening, Miss Cameron," he said with a rising inflection in his voice.

"Good evening, Mr. Graham," she replied agreeably. She had met him two or three times before, and, as he was the son of a rancher who was their nearest neighbor on the south—although thirty miles away—she could not be other than polite.

"I'm only stayin' a—a minute, Miss Cameron," he said with a smile, his eyes glowing brightly. "I've got time for only—only one dance. Can I dance this with you?'

The others had drawn back when Claude had arrived, partly because he was something of a bully among the young fellows, and partly because he was the son of an influential rancher. Connie noticed this, and it annoyed her, although she did not know why. Still there was no reason why she should not dance with him—unless it was just because she didn't like him to any extent. She looked around rather helplessly. The music started, and he leaned over and touched her arm.

"Come on, Miss Cameron, be charitable."

She rose. "Do you ask for charity?" she said coolly.

"Aw, be a good sport, Connie; we both live in the same country," he said, putting his arm about her.

She drew back quickly, her eyes darkening. "I hardly think you know me well enough to call me by my first name," she said with a lift of her brows.

"Oh, if you want to stand on ceremony, Miss Cameron——" He paused as he saw the look in her eyes.

"You've been drinking, Mr. Graham," she accused.

He grinned. "Jus' a little," he babbled. "It's the spirit of the day, isn't it? Everybody's ta—taking a few on Decoration Day."

"None of the young men I've danced with have been drinking," she said coldly. "Anyway," she added, relenting ever so little, "you're too young to do such a thing."

"Oh, I'm not exactly a yearlin'," he boasted. "Ain't it a matter of opinion—what you said?"

"It's *my* opinion, Mr. Graham," she said firmly. "I'm afraid I cannot dance with you."

"But you promised," he said sharply, his eyes snapping red.

"I didn't know then what I know now," she returned. "I shall have to refuse." She started back to the bench, and he followed.

"Listen," he began. "I——"

He didn't finish the sentence. A strong hand gripped his arm and turned him around. The same hand and arm drew him rapidly toward the door. Then he began to struggle.

"Get away from me, Robbins," he cried. "Just because you're foreman of the Triangle—— Oh, I see. This is a frame-up, eh?"

"It isn't any frame-up so far's *I'm* concerned," said Robbins. "You were annoying Miss Cameron, an' I came to her aid. She'd dance with you all right if you wasn't a little under the weather. You haven't any business in here.'

Claude swung with his free hand, but Robbins blocked the blow. Then they were at the door, and the Triangle foreman pushed the youth outside. There was a rush behind them. Robbins turned just in time to step aside to avoid a powerful blow from a man he recognized as a Bar Cross puncher. He sent the man spinning to the ground with a straight left.

"Bar Cross—yo ho—*Bar Cross!*" It was Claude shouting the signal to his clan.

In a few moments Robbins was fighting for his life. Bar Cross and Triangle men came on the run—the latter suspecting that the call might in some

way concern a Triangle man. A crowd came pouring out of the dance hall, those behind pushing those in front until Robbins and his aggressor were forced back and apart. Bar Cross and Triangle men were mingled with those of other outfits.

"Get that Triangle foreman!" shrilled Claude wildly. He had temporarily lost his reason.

The words had the effect of acquainting the members of the two outfits that the trouble was between their men. A mêlée followed, and a free-for-all fight threatened to break instantly. Then a voice was heard roaring an order.

"Bar Cross out in the street. *Get together!*"

A bulky man, standing on the farther side of the street, with his hand on his gun, had given the command.

Instantly the Bar Cross men began to fight their way out and ran to join him. Members of other outfits, not concerned, and other spectators caught in the whirlwind of action, broke away. The Triangle contingent was left standing before the dance hall. Above them in the doorway appeared the white face of Connie Cameron, pressing her hands against her cheeks.

"Oh! Oh!" she cried fearfully. "Come inside, *Triangle!*"

But the big man had stepped out and was confronting the girl's protectors.

"You, Robbins, what's the big idea?" he demanded harshly.

The Triangle foreman took a step toward him. "Young Graham's carrying his celebration too far, Trope, an' you know it," he answered steadily.

"Oh, *that's* it, is it? Well, what you goin' to do about it?"

"We're not goin' to permit Miss Cameron to be molested, if that's what you mean," replied Robbins sharply.

Flying hoofs bore down upon them in a cloud of dust before Trope could say anything further. The rider flung himself from the saddle and stepped between them. A gleam of silver shot from beneath his coat in the yellow beams of lamplight.

"None of this, Trope; I won't have it, hear me?" he said loudly, speaking to the Bar Cross foreman. "This isn't open range—this is a town. This is the county seat, and *I'm* the foreman here. I'm sheriff, Trope, and if you start anything here at this celebration I'll get you behind the bars for it if it's the last thing I do!"

Trope's eyes shot fire, and his lips froze. Then he slowly drew his hand away from his gun. A sneer appeared upon his thick lips.

"All right, Mister Strang," he said in an insulting drawl. "As you say, you're foreman here. Go on with your little party."

"An' you keep your bunch inside or take 'em out of town," snapped Strang. "If you don't, I'll deputize every other man in this town and *see that you do it!*"

Trope's eyes blazed. His hand wavered. But he knew the sheriff had the authority to do just what he threatened to do, and that he would do that very thing. The Bar Cross had the Triangle men outnumbered two to one; but with all the others against them——

He turned sharply on his heel and motioned to his men to disperse.

But Connie Cameron, from her point of vantage, caught the look he threw at the sheriff as the latter turned to his horse.

CHAPTER II.

A MAN DECLARES HIMSELF.

AS the Triangle started to move away, Connie called to Robbins, the foreman. He joined her at the top of the steps.

"Tell the men to get the horses," she said quickly, "and then come inside and see me. I will be in the corner to the right of the door waiting for you."

Robbins turned back to carry out the

order, and in a few minutes he returned to find Connie waiting for him.

"I want to thank you, Robbins," she said breathlessly. "Claude Graham *was* annoying me. I—I can't see why he wanted to do it. He had been drinking, and——"

"It's Trope's work," Robbins broke in, in a low tone. "I believe Trope had him millin' aroun' in the Rodeo on purpose an' egged him on. He wanted to pick a fight with us. He's *always* wanting to pick a fight with *some*body. He's a gunman, an' he knows he's got any of our boys stopped." The foreman's voice was worried.

"That's what I was afraid of, Robbins," Connie agreed. "But I want you to promise me something and get the others of our men to promise. Please do not say anything of what happened here to-night at the ranch—to father—to *any* one."

"But your father is certain to hear of it sooner or later," said Robbins, surprised.

"Perhaps," the girl agreed. "But not before he comes to town again, and that may be some time. If he should meet any of the Bar Cross men on the south range, I am sure none of *them* would say anything. Will you please promise, Robbins? I am afraid father might start trouble.

"I won't say a word an' none of the men'll say a word," Robbins promised. "I reckon it wasn't all the kid's fault, although everybody knows he's mean—like his father in some ways."

"And now, Robbins, I think we better get started," the girl advised. "Perhaps if we go out by way of the cottonwoods behind the barn, we can leave town unobserved by any of the Bar Cross men. I am so afraid that some of the men will meet and get into a fight, and that would mean guns, and——" She looked at him fearfully.

"And something worse," Robbins supplied grimly. "I can't just see why the Bar Cross should want to pick on us. Claude's mistake wasn't so terrible, after all. I can't get it out of my mind that it was Trope who put it in Claude's head to come over here and annoy you. There's something behind it. Maybe you better stay in town—at the hotel—an' we'll beat it."

Connie drew herself up proudly. "You think they might follow us! And do you think *I'm* afraid to take my chances with our Triangle men?"

Robbins flushed. "It isn't that, Miss Connie. They might start shootin' at us or something——"

"Come! We'll go out the rear of the hall and down to the horses. Then I'll go around into the hotel, get my coat, and be ready to start."

The foreman followed meekly, but with a gleam of admiration in his eyes. He loved Connie Cameron, as did every man on the ranch. She was a real Cameron, through and through; and she had been an able mistress of the great Triangle since the death of her mother some years before.

They passed out one of the rear entrances of the hall almost unobserved, as there was a dance in progress. Then they made their way behind the buildings to the barn, where the Triangle men had congregated. Connie went to the hotel and got her coat, and in a few minutes they were off, riding through the cottonwoods to the stream which flowed through the town, fording the stream, and thence to the road that ran southeastward across the far-flung plain toward the Triangle.

Whether or not they had gotten away unobserved, they were not followed, and after a three-hour spell in the saddle they arrived on the bench above the bottoms where the Triangle ranch buildings were grouped in the shelter of the cliffs above the river, with its graceful stands of cottonwoods.

It was about three o'clock in the morning, and when they rode into the court-

yard between the ranch house, bunk house, barn, and other buildings, the punchers dismounted at the corrals, and Robbins rode to the front of the house with Connie, to take her horse. She went to her room at once, but as she was opening the door her father came out into the hall, holding a lamp.

"Thought you were going to stay in town until morning," he said in a surprised tone.

"I changed my—my mind," said the girl. She hadn't thought of what her father would think. "It was a fine night to ride——"

"Connie!" he said sternly. "You know they dance about all night at those affairs, an' you always stay." He looked at her searchingly out of big gray eyes. He was a large man, massive of frame, with a large, firm jaw, heavy brows, iron-gray hair, clean-shaven.

"I didn't stay to-night, father, because the—the crowd didn't suit me. Now—I'm tired."

"Well, go to bed," said Will Cameron doubtfully. "But if there was anything wrong, Robbins will tell me."

Connie crept into bed, thankful that he had not persisted in questioning her. She knew Robbins would know how to explain without involving her and Claude Graham. If her father knew what had happened, he would start straight for the Bar Cross in the south, and that would mean certain trouble.

The first thing she heard when she woke some four hours afterward was her father's voice in the courtyard below her window.

"We'll do no such thing!" Will Cameron thundered. "Our cattle stay where they are, an' you put in another thousand head to-day, Robbins. You hear me?"

She looked out her window and saw her father and Robbins in the courtyard. Then she dressed hurriedly and went downstairs. The housekeeper told her that her father had waited to eat breakfast with her, and at that moment Will Cameron came in.

He looked at his daughter keenly, but his face soon lighted with a smile of pleasure.

"You look fresh as a daisy, Connie," he told her. "Now for some breakfast, an' you'll just naturally be tiptop."

"Daddy, what were you telling Robbins about the cattle," she asked anxiously when he had served her. "Are you going to send more cattle south of the river?"

"I shore am," said the stockman heartily; "an' *then* some. One of Graham's men down there had the nerve to tell Robbins we were getting too far south."

"But, father, we never *have* ranged our stock south of the river, and you know Graham doesn't like it."

"An' he's never ranged his stock as far north as Rattle Butte, has he?" flared her father. "I told his men we wouldn't go south of Rattle Butte. That's ten miles from the river, and leaves him twenty miles from the butte to his place that he's never used at all, what with his range along the Missouri down there."

The girl looked worried. Her woman's instinct for scenting trouble was uppermost. She knew Claude Graham would exaggerate the incident of the night before at the dance. He would likely tell his father that she had refused to speak to him, or some such thing, and Trope would doubtless back him up.

"It's Trope that I'm thinking of, father," she finally confessed. "I'm afraid he wants trouble, and——"

"Trope!" blurted Cameron, putting down his knife and fork. "Don't mention his name to me." He scowled and thought for a few minutes. "Foreman of the Bar Cross!" he snorted. "That isn't what Graham brought him up here for by a long shot. He's a bully, a gun fighter, an' a killer! I reckon Graham figured he'd intimidate me through Trope because I haven't any gunmen

Well, I've lived a long time in this country without gunmen in my outfit, an' I guess I can make out still. I thought the trouble would be over when Lennister broke up the Blodgett gang of rustlers an' got Blodgett——" He paused, and their eyes met.

Both were thinking of the same thing —of Lennister, the youthful-appearing, gray-eyed, soft-spoken man of uncertain age, whose reputation carried fear into the hearts of men, whose lightning draw was proverbial, whose gun was presumed to be for hire.

Connie remembered how he had come to the Triangle, quiet and unassuming; how he had routed an imposter who had impersonated him in an effort to steal ten thousand dollars that were in the Triangle safe for the capture of the outlaw, Blodgett; how he had rounded up the gang and had shot Blodgett down on their very porch in a gun play so fast that it seemed a miracle. She remembered the look in his eyes when she had accused him of being a paid killer. She wished she hadn't said that. And she remembered, most of all, the evening he had left the ranch for a town in the north, when she had asked him to stay and take a place in the Triangle outfit, and he had said it might be dangerous for his peace of mind, and had told her if she ever needed him to send for him.

"Besides, we *need* that range down there," Will Cameron said, changing the subject and avoiding her eyes. "Our north range is in bad shape. I've *got* to put the beeves down there. I'm putting them there, an' there they're going to stay."

His note of finality convinced the girl that it would be futile to say anything further, so she dropped the subject and did her best to cheer her father as she had always done since the death of her mother.

They had just finished eating when the housekeeper came to the door and announced that Robbins wished to see Cameron. Connie went to the rear door in time to overhear what the foreman said.

"They're down there, Will. Graham an' Trope an' a couple of their men. They say they want to talk to you."

"Wonder they wouldn't come up to the house," said Cameron angrily. "I know what they want, an' I know what they're going to get. Send my horse out. I'll go down."

Connie ran out and threw her arms about her father's neck. "Daddy, be careful," she pleaded. "You know what Trope is, as you said, and Graham himself hasn't any too good a reputation."

"An' I know what shorthorn beeves are going to be worth this fall, an' what notes I've got to meet at the bank, an' that the Teton Stockmen's Association drew the Blue Dome Range south limit straight east and west just below Rattle Butte. Connie, go inside. Your old dad is still running the Triangle."

She watched him ride away, and then ran to little Joe Curley, the barn man. "Get my horse, Joe. I'm going for a ride."

Joe hurried to comply. It was the usual thing for the Triangle mistress to go for a ride every morning.

But Connie was not thinking of her usual morning exercise on her beautiful black Spot. Her woman's instinct had become more than a premonition. She faced the truth. Trouble had come to the Triangle!

CHAPTER III.

TRAGEDY.

WILL CAMERON rode with Robbins south from the buildings to the ford of the river, where they crossed the stream, passed through a grove of cottonwoods, and came out upon the plain which stretched southward to the blue rim of the horizon—unbroken save

for the block of purple in the middle distance, which was Rattle Butte.

Four men were sitting their horses awaiting them. Cameron picked them out as he approached: Frank Graham, tall and rather lanky, but big-boned, with a grayish complexion which neither tanned nor sunburned, close-clipped sandy mustache, and cold, blue eyes that at time seemed colorless. At his side was Trope, his foreman and reputed gunman, hard of face, bulky, glowering, with near-set, small eyes of brownish green. Behind them were two men who evidently were Bar Cross punchers.

"Wonder you wouldn't come up to the house," growled Cameron in greeting. "You've never been there yet, Graham."

"And I hardly think this is the time to take advantage of your hospitality," said the Bar Cross owner coldly. "I come here——"

"Oh, I know," Cameron broke in. "We might just as well get right down to business, Graham. You're sore because I'm grazing beeves down here. But I sent word to you that I didn't intend to range south of Rattle Butte."

"That isn't the point," snapped Graham. "Your cattle have no business south of the river. I'm going to use this range myself."

Cameron's brows lifted in surprise. "You want this grass up *here?*" he asked. "What's the matter with all the range you've got south of Rattle? What's the matter with the range south of your home ranch? There's good grass down there, an' water."

"I'm buying more cattle," replied Graham stiffly. He had more of the manner of a man of the towns than of the range. And as Cameron looked at him speculatively he recalled that Graham had been in the country only six or seven years; none knew very much about him, none had been intimate with him.

"Well, Graham," said the Triangle owner slowly, "I've lived in the Blue Dome country for more than thirty years, an' no owner of the Bar Cross has ever had to range cattle north of Rattle Butte. There've been owners, Graham, that have had more stock than *you're* running," he finished pointedly.

"That has nothing to do with it," said Graham, frowning coldly. "What *has* been done, and what *I* do, are two different things." There was a short, harsh laugh at this, and Cameron looked at Trope for the first time, to see a sneer on the man's thick lips.

"As far as I can learn, *you've* never used this range down here, Mr. Cameron," Graham continued, too polite to be sincere in his manner. "I believe you are supposed to stick to Blue Dome, and not come south of the river."

"Oh, you suppose *that,* do you?" cried Cameron, losing his temper. "You've been here a few years an' then take it on yourself to make the range limits? Well, Graham, I'm president of the Teton Stockmen's Association, an' I know what I'm talking about. The association put the south limit of Blue Dome Range just below Rattle Butte *twenty years ago!* You figure you can get around that?"

Graham smiled wryly. "As president of the association you will probably recall that I am not a member. *You* doubtless know who belongs," he added sarcastically.

In that instant Cameron suspected a quality of bitterness in the other's voice. Did Graham resent the fact that he had not been asked to join the organization?

"You're pretty far south to belong to our outfit," Cameron observed.

"I'm south of the river, yes," said Graham quickly. "That's just the point. You have no members south of the river. Yet you want to claim this range down here."

"Only a small part of it," said Cameron calmly. "Just from here to Rattle Butte, that's all. There's plenty left to

range more stock than you've got, Graham. If you want to put in an application to our——"

"Not by any means," snapped Graham. "I just came up here to tell you that I have a couple thousand head just south of the Butte, and I'm sending them *north* of the Butte this morning—in charge of Trope, my foreman."

Cameron now looked from one to the other with a light of understanding in his eyes. Then his brows lowered and his face became stern.

"That's an out-an'-out threat, Graham," he said evenly. "You're trying to intimidate me with your—your confounded gunman!"

"Don't say that!" exclaimed Graham sharply. "I'm well within my rights. This is open range. I have no understanding with your association. Trope is my *foreman*—don't forget that. From this minute he is in charge of my stock on the Rattle Butte Range. That's all this morning, Mr. Cameron."

Without giving the Triangle owner a chance to reply, he whirled his horse, drove in his steel, and galloped away, followed by the two punchers. Trope lingered, turning his horse leisurely.

"I reckon your cattle are too far south, Cameron," he called insolently. "I'll need that range, understand? Better think it over an' think it over *to-day*. I haven't any time to monkey around with you even if you *are* the great high lord of Blue Dome!"

With that and a jarring laugh, he rode away, keeping an eye on the Triangle owner, however, who seemed on the point of dashing after him.

"How far south are our cattle?" Cameron asked Robbins.

"About six miles," Robbins replied.

"Go down there an' keep your eye out," Cameron ordered. "I'm going up on the north range an' send down every man that can be spared."

As he rode through the ford, Connie Cameron crept back from her place of concealment at the edge of the trees and mounted. Her face was white, for her fears had proved well founded. The Triangle and Bar Cross were threatened by the ominous specter that ever overshadows open cattle country—a range war.

Will Cameron went north, and that afternoon Triangle men began arriving at the home ranch and crossing the river to the south range. Meanwhile, a man arrived at the ranch with a message from Robbins.

"What is it?" Connie demanded imperatively as the man was changing horses, preparatory to continuing his ride north to see the Triangle owner.

"Bar Cross cattle north of Rattle Butte," said the man succinctly. "Robbins has drove our herd back this way to keep out of trouble an' keep 'em from mixing with Graham's stock."

Connie stamped her foot in indignation and helplessness. It had come, and she was powerless to prevent it. If only—— As she walked toward the house her eyes were wistful. That scoundrel Trope! Of course, in sending him north with the Bar Cross cattle. Graham could conveniently excuse himself from responsibility for anything that might happen. Was all this trouble just because of the range? Connie knew better, and bit her lip. Could she have avoided it by dancing with Claude Graham? The thought disturbed her. After all—was *she* responsible? If only they had a man who could stand up to Trope!

Will Cameron came in a great hurry late in the afternoon. Without stopping to eat, he changed horses and galloped through the ford and down to the south range. The cattle had been moved north a considerable distance, and the Bar Cross cattle were not a mile south of the Triangle herd. They were still moving north.

Cameron gave orders to shift the Triangle herd to the east, out of the path

of the Bar Cross stock. But at sunset the Triangle herd was within two miles of the big bend in the river to eastward, where it turned southeast toward the bad lands. The cook wagon was put near the river across from the ranch house to be handy to water. Both outfits ceased operations before nightfall, and Cameron rode to the house, his face a study of grim and terrible concentration over the problem presented by Trope's bold move.

"He figures to merge the herds," he muttered absently at the supper table. "But I don't quite get his game in doing it."

"Father," said Connie in sudden inspiration, "why not appeal to Sheriff Strang?"

The eager look in her eyes died as she saw her father sit up and stare at her sternly.

"I've ranched over thirty years in here without asking any help of a sheriff," was all he said.

And even Connie could see that the sheriff would be powerless to regulate range conditions.

"But the association!" she exclaimed. "You're president——"

"That's the trouble," grumbled Cameron. "That's why I don't figure I can go to them. An' they're busy."

Will Cameron went into his little office in the front of the house after supper. Connie saw him when he came out, and her hands flew to her breast with a little cry. It had been years, save the time he had gone with Lennister to rout out the Blodgett gang, since she had seen her father wearing his gun.

He came back to the house late that night, and went directly to his room. Connie tried to sleep, but found it impossible. At last she rose, and, putting on her slippers and dressing gown, she went out on the litle balcony above the front porch.

It was one of those sublime nights which mark the merging of the prairie spring with summer. The purple canopy of the sky was hung with clusters of gleaming stars. The trembling leaves of the cottonwoods were silver spangles against the shadow of the bluffs. The purring lullaby of the river sounded faintly above the plaintive rustle of the wind in cottonwood and alder and quivering aspen. The cool air was laden with the scent of lilacs and the breath of the fields in the bottoms.

It was a scene of indescribable peace—soothing to the senses. So Connie thought. How she loved this ranch home where she had been born, where she had always lived save for the three years at school in the prairie city far to southward.

Her thoughts were rudely interrupted by sudden sounds that were not of the elements—echoes, muffled, then clear-cut as the wind changed momentarily. Sharp reports came from beyond the dark line of trees along the river below the fields. A short silence and then they came again—the unmistakable reports of guns.

For a few moments Connie clutched the rail of the balcony to steady herself. Then the faintness passed and she flew into the hall. But there was no need to rouse her father. She saw his light shining through the keyhole and crack of his door; heard him moving about hurriedly. In another moment he flung open the door and ran past her, fully dressed and armed. She sensed vaguely that he had kept his clothes on. She moved down the hall as the housekeeper came out of her room, just in time to steady her as she groped faintly.

Joe Curley, the barn man, was already up and out when Will Cameron reached the courtyard. In less than three minutes Cameron was in the saddle, galloping for the ford. Through the shadowy, interlaced branches of the trees he saw a red glare, and as he crossed the stream and burst through the trees to the plain, he saw the cook wagon in flames.

Flying hoofs echoed to the left, and he turned in that direction. He saw darting shadows, then spurts of flame, and the air rang with the barking of guns. To the right was a dark mass—the cattle. A rider bore down upon him from that direction, and red flashes streamed from a gun. Cameron fired twice and saw the oncoming horse rear as its rider slumped in the saddle, fell, and came clear, to lie motionless on the plain.

Just ahead he heard Robbins' voice shouting a command:

"Take to the trees!"

The Triangle men evidently were to the left, close to the river. Cameron turned his horse toward them. He saw horsemen on the right bearing in that direction, and suddenly one spurted toward him—a huge form in the saddle on a big horse.

He jerked his gun out again and swung it up as they came together. A ball of fire seemed to burst in his face, and a hot brand seared his brain. He was conscious of falling, of striking something, then came darkness, total darkness, as sudden as the blowing out of a match.

Robbins brought the still, limp form of Will Cameron to the ranch. He carried his unconscious employer upstairs to his room, with Connie, her face white as death, following, trailed by the housekeeper. They washed the wound in Cameron's head, dressed it, and then Robbins took off his clothes and put him in bed. The girl and the housekeeper came in to nurse him and watch over him while Robbins hurried to call a man and send him at breakneck speed to Ransford for the doctor.

When Robbins returned he stood uncertainly in the doorway, looking at the two women and the still form in the bed.

"I'm goin' back south of the river," he told Connie in a low voice. "They've gone south again now. They won't be back to-night after—after this."

Connie nodded dully. There seemed to be a film over her eyes, as if the tragic events of the night had stunned her.

"I'll go make you some strong coffee, dearie, since you won't try to get some rest," said the housekeeper.

Connie looked at her with a blank expression as she left the room.

Will Cameron began to mutter in delirium. "I—see—you. I see—you——"

As he whispered the name, Connie seemed to come to herself with the suddenness of an electric shock. She straightened, and her eyes flashed. Her lips no longer trembled, but froze into a fine, white line. She stepped to her father's table, opened the ink bottle there, and wrote hurriedly on a sheet of paper. Then she sealed the note in an envelope and addressed it. Her face and eyes appeared years older as she walked to the head of the stairs and called in a queer voice to the housekeeper.

"Call Joe Curley," she instructed. "Send him here to me, *at once*."

Joe came, his face white and his eyes startled, and stood before her with his hat held nervously in his hands.

"Ride to Conroy, Joe," said the girl, handing him the envelope. "Ride to Conroy, and deliver that. If he isn't there, *find him*. Don't come back until you've delivered that message—understand?"

The little wrangler's eyes popped as he read the name on the envelope. Then he thrust it inside his shirt, and his jaw clicked shut.

"I'll deliver it, Miss Connie," he said simply, but in deadly earnest.

"Take Spot," she ordered. "He's fast."

The housekeeper came with the coffee, and Connie sipped it, her eyes gleaming with determination. The housekeeper marveled at the change in her, and hesitated to speak.

Robbins came again in two hours, just before dawn, with the information that the herds were merged, and that two of the men had been wounded, and that he had put them in the bunk house.

The girl looked up at him keenly. "Do you know who shot father?" she asked quietly.

"I—couldn't say for sure," replied the Triangle foreman. "But I have my opinion."

"Yes, yes—I know," said the girl half to herself. "We know, of course. We both know. Robbins, I've sent for a man to take charge. This isn't father's kind of a game, it isn't yours, and it isn't mine. It takes a certain kind of a man to play this kind of a game. I've sent for him."

Robbins' look was puzzled. He, too, noticed the grim change in the girl as she sat by the bedside holding her father's hand.

"Who've you sent for, Miss Connie?"

"I've sent for a man who will know what to do," she said fiercely. *"Robbins, I've sent for Lennister!"*

CHAPTER IV.

AN ARRIVAL.

AT ten o'clock Doctor French arrived from Ransford. He found Will Cameron still unconscious, delirious with fever, and watched over by Connie, who looked pale and wan, but whose brave spirit was undaunted. After an examination he announced that he would have to remove the bullet which had lodged in the stockman's skull, and ordered Connie from the room. The housekeeper was recruited to assist him.

Connie went out on the porch, and it was there that Robbins found her when he returned to the ranch for the second time with an amazing piece of information.

"The Bar Cross men are driving the whole herd south," he told her. "They outnumber our men two to one, an' I don't know how to stop them without bringing on a fight, an' we wouldn't have a show." His air was gloomy. "But we're ready to try," he added grimly, looking to the mistress of the Triangle for assent.

"You mean they are driving *our* cattle south with theirs?" asked the girl in bewilderment.

"That's the size of it, Miss Connie. They've got about fifteen hundred head of their own, an' they're mixed with a thousand or twelve hundred wearing our iron. If you say the word——"

But Connie shook her head. "Is Trope in charge?" she asked absently, thinking deeply.

"No, Trope hasn't showed up this mornin'," replied Robbins with a puzzled frown. "That beats me."

"Get my horse, Robbins; I'll take a look," she ordered.

She quickly donned her riding clothes and after receiving the assurance of the housekeeper that her father was not liable to succumb to the operation of removing the bullet, rode away with Robbins. One look at the edge of the plain south of the river was enough. The big herd was already a mere blot under a cloud of dust some distance in the south.

"I'd have told you the minute they started, Miss Connie, but I tried to argue an' trick 'em out of it," explained Robbins. "An' I don't see how we're goin' to stop 'em unless we raid 'em with every man on the ranch, an' then we'd have a running fight on our hands." The foreman was visibly excited and at a loss.

"You are right," she said. "We can't stop them at present." After all, Robbins had always depended upon Will Cameron. The stockman had repeatedly told him not to make a move without his consent. In fact, Robbins had been a sort of figurehead, for Cameron had been the real foreman-manager of the Triangle as well as the owner.

Suddenly the girl brightened. "Robbins!" she exclaimed. "Don't you see what they're doing? They're stealing our cattle! Let them drive them away. We'll make that old Graham pay for this!"

He caught her meaning instantly. "Dog-gone, Miss Connie, but I believe you're right. What'll I do with the men? Keep 'em here at the bunk house—bring 'em in, I mean? The cook wagon's burned, an' all they've had today is coffee."

"Yes, bring them in for the present," the girl directed.

"An' will you have the doctor go in an' look at those two men in the bunk house, Miss Connie? They're both shot, but not bad."

"I forgot all about them," said Connie in self-reproach. "I'll look in myself and send the doctor in as soon—as soon as he can go. You've had breakfast? Good. Keep your eye on what takes place down here, Robbins, and report to me."

They had been riding south at a trot, and now Connie stopped. After a long look across the plain toward the moving herd and the big, square outline of Rattle Butte, she turned her horse and started back for the house.

Trope had doubtless gone down to the Bar Cross to report. She pressed her lips firmly together, and her eyes flashed. Then she lifted her head and seemed to shake a weight from her shoulders. Joe Curley had ridden away on Spot—her horse—one of the fastest horses on the Triangle. He must be close to the town of Conroy by this time—perhaps there already. She felt a thrill. What was it Lennister had told her that evening he had left the ranch? "If you ever need me—*send* for me!" He had meant it, too. And she had called him a paid killer! Now she was waiting for him, hoping for him, *longing* for him with all her heart. Why? To buy his services! Yes, she might as well acknowledge it to herself. And why not? Hadn't Trope shot her father down in cold blood? She had heard Will Cameron whisper his name in his delirium. Wasn't he a notorious gun fighter—a killer? And wasn't she entitled to protect the Triangle now that her father was unable to take charge? But then, Lennister knew cows, she reflected. He would accept the temporary management of the ranch under the circumstances. *That* was what she was sending for him for, she thought with a sigh of relief. To take charge in the emergency.

She had crossed the river, but was still in the trees below the bottoms, when a rider came suddenly into the trail ahead of her and drew rein. Connie's face went white when she recognized him. It was Claude Graham!

He took off his hat as she rode up, and a peculiar expression on his face caused her to look at him sharply. Before she could ride around him, or order him out of the way, he spoke contritely.

"Good morning, Miss Cameron. I'm sorry for what happened the other night in town."

Connie was taken by surprise. It hadn't occurred to her that he would take occasion to apologize to her. Moreover, he appeared to be in earnest.

"Are you sure that you mean that?" she returned coldly.

"Yes, I do. And I came up here to see if I couldn't do something for you."

Connie now was actually astonished. But instantly she was reminded of what had taken place since that night; of her feeling of responsibility for it. After all, Claude Graham had started it.

"I don't wish you to do anything for me," she said haughtily. "Please draw your horse aside, Mr. Graham."

"But Miss Cameron, hear me out," he persisted. "I know you're in trouble, and if you want me to, I'll see if I can get dad to lay off."

She looked at him in horrified under-

standing, although he misconstrued her attitude. He was making a proposition to bring about peace? So then he *did* know what the trouble was all about. It *was* more than a mere difficulty over the range.

"I'll tell him to lay off if *you* want me to, Miss Cameron," Claude was saying for the second time.

Connie's face went red, then white. She drove in her spurs, and her mount lunged against his. As his horse reared back, she rose in the stirrups and struck at him with her quirt. The leather landed on his shoulder, and then she was galloping for the house.

Her face was still burning with indignation when she went inside. Doctor French was eating a lunch in the kitchen. He nodded cheerfully.

"Came out all right," he said briskly. "He'll pull through, but he probably won't recover consciousness for a day or two. Not till the fever's spent. No getting about for him for a month at least, I'd say. I'll stay here to-night. Why, child—help her, madam!"

The reaction had finally claimed the girl, and she sank back into the housekeeper's arms in a faint.

"We'll put her to bed," the doctor decided, his professional instincts awakened immediately as he administered to her.

When Connie opened her eyes she was in bed. She drank a potion the doctor gave her and immediately fell asleep.

After a time—a long time, it seemed—voices came to her as from a great distance. She did not open her eyes, but she knew that she was awake, and she listened. The voices came from the courtyard.

"I tell you, you can't disturb her—an' that's final!" It was the sharp, barking voice of Doctor French.

Connie moved, opened her eyes, and sat up. She felt refreshed, repossessed of her strength. She rose and went to the window. In the courtyard, sitting their horses, were Sheriff Strang and Trope. As she looked, they dismounted.

She flew to put on her clothes, and in the space of a few minutes she was dressed and hurrying down the stairs. The sheriff, Trope, and the doctor had come around to the front of the house, and Connie stepped out on the porch and looked down at them coldly.

Sheriff Strang removed his hat. "Howdy, Miss Cameron," he greeted. He seemed uncomfortable, and scowled at Trope, who looked up at her curiously, lazily, almost insolently.

"Your father is better, I hear," the sheriff continued, "and I'm sure glad of it."

"Did you come here to tell me that?" she asked with a lift of her brows.

"Well, not exactly," he confessed uneasily. "You see—er—well, Miss Cameron, the Bar Cross has made a complaint against your father and the Triangle men. They say your men attacked them and shot two of their men, and——"

"Sheriff Strang, you have known my father a great many years," said the girl scornfully, "and you know that could not be true. My father was shot from his saddle, and two of our men wounded when—it was that—that *beast* who shot him!"

She pointed at Trope, but the Bar Cross foreman merely flicked the ash from his cigarette nonchalantly.

"Then—if you can prove it, Miss Cameron—you will have to make complaint also," said Strang, more nervous than ever. "But I have to serve a warrant when one is sworn out. That's my duty. I have a warrant for your—your father, Miss Cameron, and I'll have to serve it as soon as he is well enough to be seen."

She saw the glimmer of a smile on Trope's lips.

"You think you can do anything like this—you murdering beast of a Bar Cross gun fighter? You——" Her

voice died away as the swift pound of hoofs came from the courtyard, and a rider arrived in a cloud of dust.

A little, inarticulate cry came from Connie as the horseman flung himself from his saddle and stood before them.

"Lennister!" she sobbed. Then she sobered, and her eyes darted fire. "You're in charge here, Lennister—I hire you this minute. *Tell that man to leave the ranch!"*

Lennister turned and leisurely inspected Trope, whom she indicated, and who had stepped back with his hand on his gun as he heard the name.

Sheriff Strang's jaw dropped, but he did not seem to altogether disapprove of the situation.

"You heard what she said?" Lennister inquired in a drawl.

"I ain't hard of hearing," snarled Trope. "You've been here before, I take it. Well, you're not chasing *me* off!"

"I reckon you must be the Troop or Trip or Tripe or some such name of man Joe was tellin' me about on the way down," said Lennister. "Well, Mr. Trob, I'll have to tell you to leave the ranch. You heard me get my orders."

"You seem to be glad enough to take 'em from who gave 'em to you," sneered Trope.

Lennister's eyes hardened. *"Get out!"* he commanded.

Trope's eyes blazed, and his hand tightened on his gun. It was out of its holster a bare two inches when Lennister leaped and caught him on the jaw with a powerful right.

Trope went spinning backward and fell. He twisted and looked up to find Lennister covering him with his gun, looking at him narrowly.

"You going?" Lennister's words brimmed with warning.

Trope got to his feet; his face was contorted with rage. His eyes were points of flickering fire.

"This takes it out of your hands, sheriff," he snarled as he backed to his horse.

"Keep that right hand high!" commanded Lennister sharply.

Trope's curses floated back to them as he sped away.

Lennister turned to the others. Sheriff Strang was first to speak. "You know I told you, Lennister, after that Blodgett affair, that you couldn't come back into this country as a paid gunman," he said slowly. "I'm still standing by my word."

"He's here to manage the Triangle until father has recovered," said Connie Cameron, facing the sheriff and clenching her palms. "And *I* am responsible."

"In that case, he can stay, Miss Cameron," said the sheriff, bowing gravely.

CHAPTER V.

A MISSION.

SHERIFF STRANG, Doctor French, Lennister, and Connie ate supper in the Triangle dining room at sunset. The sheriff and doctor talked amiably, the former apparently seeking to avoid the eyes of Connie Cameron. He wasn't altogether sure about his duty in this case; and he wondered in just what capacity Will Cameron's daughter had engaged the services of Lennister. He studied the latter covertly, decided he was about twenty-six years old, good eyes—although he had caught a certain look in them when he had ordered Trope to go that revealed what he thought was another and dangerous side to his character. Yes, Lennister was undoubtedly dangerous. Chestnut hair, clean, bronzed skin, decent manners, good looking—the official stole a glance at Connie and saw that she also was regarding her new foreman surreptitiously. As for Lennister himself, he said little or nothing. Early in the meal he had curbed attempts to engage him in conversation.

After supper the doctor went back to the sick room and the sheriff took his departure.

"You needn't bother much about that —that warrant, Miss Cameron," he told the girl with a friendly smile. "As you say, I've known your father a long time, and I don't believe all I hear. It's hard for me to handle troubles such as these—these affairs between ranches But are you sure you can handle your new man?"

"I have every confidence that Lennister will obey my orders," replied the girl. "But, in an emergency like this I will naturally depend a great deal on his judgment."

"That's what has me worried," said Strang slowly. "That man is as quiet and docile as a kitten, and that's what makes him all the more dangerous."

He approached Lennister, who was sitting on the porch steps, smoking.

"I'm going in to town, Lennister," he announced, "but I want you to remember one thing: I expect you to keep your gun cold."

Lennister gazed at him quizzically. "There are times, sheriff, when a cold gun means a cold heart," he said enigmatically.

"Meaning a dead one—*I* know," the sheriff said. "But I'm giving you a sort of friendly warning."

"Thanks, sheriff. Did you give Trope the same warning?"

"I did," said Strang with a scowl. "And I meant it, even if he *is* in another county down there."

"That starts us even at the barrier, Lennister drawled.

The sheriff opened his mouth, closed it, scowled, then nodded to Connie and took his departure.

"Will you come in the office, Lennister?" Connie invited.

He rose to his splendid height and removed his hat. She noted his clear-cut profile in the last light of the sunset, his kindling gray eyes as he looked at her suddenly; then instinctively her gaze fell to the butt of the gun on his right thigh, the slim, brown, tapering fingers of that lightning hand above it, hooked in the cartridge belt. It gave her a feeling of security—that hand and that gun. And suddenly she looked up at him, startled. Was *that* why she had sent for him?

"Couldn't we talk out here, ma'am?" he asked. "I admire to look at those lilacs an' sniff their perfume. I've had few flowers in mine, Miss Connie."

Something in his voice held her rooted to the spot in sheer wonder. It all seemed so incongruous—this man whose gun was said to be for hire; who had shot outlaws and perhaps others in terrible fashion at the risk of his own life; who laughed at death when matching his draw with killers—this man talking of lilacs and flowers! For several moments she was disconcerted and not sure of herself. But she motioned to him to sit down on the steps, and sat down on the step above him.

"Why did you send for me, ma'am?" he asked dreamily.

"Because the Triangle and Bar Cross have become engaged in a range war," she explained; "because Trope shot my father and he is unable to look after the ranch affairs; because the Bar Cross is playing the kind of a game that neither Robbins nor I understand how to meet. I thought perhaps you—I need *some* one——" She faltered.

"I see," he said slowly, without looking at her. "Are you sure Trope shot your father?"

"He's about the only man on the Bar Cross who would dare to do it," said the girl bitterly; "and father keeps mentioning him in his delirium—keeps saying he saw him. And Robbins believes he was the man. Trope has a terrible reputation."

"I know," admitted Lennister. "Joe was tellin' me things on the way down. I came fast as I could after I got your

note. Had to hold in my bay a little to keep Joe along, or I'd been here sooner. What started all the trouble, ma'am?"

The quality of his voice, coolly confident, sympathetic, calm, reassured her, and she explained what had happened at length, omitting nothing from the time they had first driven the cattle south of the river, including both meetings with Claude Graham, the visit of Frank Graham, and Trope's ultimatum —everything up to the time of his coming.

He was silent a long time. "Is it all right for me to smoke, Miss Connie?" he asked.

She laughed softly. "I was born on the Triangle, Lennister," she reminded him.

"You're real Western then," he observed as he took out papers and tobacco and fashioned a cigarette.

The purple twilight fell over the land, and a mocking bird saluted it with a concert. The wind freshened and filled the leaves of the cottonwoods with vague whisperings. One by one the stars began their march across the sky. the bluffs gathered their shadows, and the night shook out its satiny skirts of darkness.

"Yes, I reckon you're real Western, Miss Connie," said Lennister after he had touched the fire to his cigarette. He paused, and then: "Do you want me to kill Trope?"

Connie Cameron drew in her breath quickly. "No, no, *no!*" she exclaimed in an anxious undertone. "Did you think I sent for you for *that?*" She placed a hand on his shoulder. *"Did* you, Lennister?"

"No, I reckon not," he confessed whimsically. "But I'm here for orders."

"Would you go out and deliberately kill Trope if I told you to do it?" she asked, incredulous.

"Yes, I probably would," he answered bluntly.

She drew back. What manner of man was this she had hired? She felt a stab at her heart. She had hoped—but *why* had she hoped? She might have known? What could she expect? Hadn't she seen him kill an outlaw? True, he had to do so or lose his own life, but——

"An' then again, I might not," he said suddenly.

Connie breathed freely again. "I'm —I'm glad to hear you—say that," she stammered.

"I might chase him out of the country," said Lennister as though talking to himself. "Then—if he wouldn't go—it would be up to him." He looked up at her and she thought she caught a gleam of humor in his eyes, although she could not see them well.

"I do not want any one killed," she said severely. "I want you to heed the sheriff's warning and keep your gun cold. That is, unless—unless——" She found herself unable to go on.

"I understand, Miss Connie," he said, rising abruptly. "Is your acting foreman—what's his name——"

"Robbins."

"Down south of the river to-night?"

"Yes, he's down there keeping watch on what the Bar Cross is doing. But I expect him back any minute."

"Then I'll drop into the bunk house until he comes," said Lennister as she rose. "When he comes, I'd like to see him, of course. My horse is pretty tired, I reckon. If I should need one, I suppose there's one handy?"

"The men have their strings in the corrals. Joe Curley will find you one, and I'll tell him to see that you get the best."

"Thanks." He turned to go. "I didn't expect you to say you wanted me to kill Trope, ma'am," he called to her softly. "But I may have to do it!"

She stood on the porch, breathless, thrilled, fearful, and watched him disappear around the corner of the house.

And still and all, there was the peace of perfect security in her heart, even though she blamed herself for it.

CHAPTER VI.

AT BAR CROSS.

SEVERAL of the men in the bunk house nodded to Lennister when he entered, and all looked at him curiously and respectfully. Joe Curley had spread the news of his coming, and already the incident of his clash with Trope was the subject of awed comment.

Lennister chose an empty bunk, hung his hat on a peg, unbuckled his gun belt, and placed it at the head; then he lay down on the bunk and closed his eyes. Some might have thought he was sleeping, but this was not the case. He was reviewing carefully everything Connie Cameron had told him, weighing each incident and detail in his mind, formulating his plans. And the girl herself occupied no small measure of his thoughts.

It was thus that Robbins found him when he returned to the ranch an hour later. Lennister rose, buckled on his gun, put on his hat, and led the way into the courtyard.

"Miss Connie told me you'd taken charge," Robbins said. "I'm glad you've come, Lennister," he added frankly. "We're up against it with that Bar Cross crowd."

"Where have they got the cattle?" Lennister asked.

"Down near Rattle Butte. I think they have a camp down there."

"I know every foot of that country, almost," mused Lennister. "Was in there when I first came up this way. There's a creek or some springs at the butte, eh, Robbins?"

"Springs an' marshy ground below 'em," Robbins replied.

"Trees on both sides of the butte as I remember it?"

"That's right, an' the trees run quite a spell southeast of Rattle, too," Robbins affrmed.

"Can you see to it that I get a good horse?" asked Lennister.

"Joe has one for you out of my own string. Why—you goin' to ride tonight?" Robbins seemed very much surprised.

"I'm goin' to the Bar Cross, but you needn't say anything about it to Miss Connie," said Lennister. "Listen, Robbins, are the men ready to go?"

"All fit. They've had plenty of rest this afternoon."

"Good. Now, Robbins, you get the men out after a while an' slope down southeast so that the Bar Cross bunch with the cattle can't see you. Go a good ways east. It'll be along toward morning before the moon gets up, an' you'll be able to slip back to the trees southeast of the butte. Get the trees between you an' the Bar Cross camp before you go in. Bring along an extra horse for me. Better let the night hawk trail you with a string, for we'll probably need 'em. Keep far enough away from the butte so they can't hear the horses. Get in there by midnight an' wait there for me."

"Wait for you," Robbins repeated. "We'll do it. An' if you shouldn't show up—*then* what?"

"Then hot-foot it back to the ranch," said Lennister grimly. "But I've a notion I'll be back before morning."

"They'll probably have a lookout up on the butte," observed Robbins thoughtfully.

"I was thinking of that," said Lennister, "an' that's why you'd better hustle down there before long an' get in while it's dark—before the moon. I'll try an' take care of the lookout on the way down. If you can slope out of here without Miss Connie knowing it, so much the better."

"She is sitting up with her father until midnight, when the housekeeper takes her place," Robbins volunteered.

"We can get out in pairs by the lower road beyond the barn, I reckon."

"That's good," said Lennister. "No need causing Miss Connie any more worry or startin' her to wondering. I'll be goin', Robbins."

A few minutes later Lennister was fording the river. He came out of the trees upon the plain and started northeast, riding at a stiff lope. Robbins had seen to it that he had a good mount, and he covered the miles at an excellent rate, keeping far to the east of Rattle Butte where the Bar Cross punchers had taken the big herd.

Lennister had been in the country before, as he had told Robbins. He knew the exact location of the Bar Cross ranch house which was some ten miles southwest of Rattle Butte on a little stream that flowed from the northwest into the big Missouri in the south. He had, on the occasion when he first came north from the Musselshell country, stopped at the very camp Robbins had spoken of at Rattle Butte. There had been no one there then, and he had spent a night in the cabin on the west side of the butte. He had gone to the top of the butte, too, for a survey of the country, and he was familiar with the big table-land up there which could be reached from one side only—the east.

All this he had in mind when he gave his instructions to Robbins. But first he was going to the Bar Cross—after he had had a look on top of the butte.

As he rode, he took advantage of every shadow, of every piece of cover, of every depression and miniature coulee in the surface of the broad plain. In time he brought up at the line of trees and willows southeast of the butte. Keeping in the shadow of these he walked his horse to a point just below the butte's eastern slope. This slope furnished the only means of reaching the top of Rattle, for on the other sides the butte fell away in sheer precipices to the plain.

For a spell he deliberated. He decided that if a lookout had been posted on top the butte, he would be on the north side, probably the northwest corner where he could keep watch to the north, in which direction was the Triangle, and to the west where the herd was likely bedded down.

There were scrub growths of buck brush on either side of the slope, marking its edge. For some time Lennister waited and listened without hearing a sound wave save the usual vague noises of the night. He surmised it could not be more than nine o'clock. Finally he rode boldly up the slope, keeping well to the right, near the buck brush. He remembered that there was a miniature lake in the center of the table-land on top the butte formed by the winter snows and spring rains. There were willows about it, and a few trees.

He gained the table-land, rode to the shelter of the trees, pushed through to the western side, and surveyed the flat prospect of level ground which extended to the western and northern edges of the table-land. But no lookout was in sight. Either Trope, if he was with the herd, did not think it necessary to post a lookout, or else he considered it too early.

Lennister rode close to the western edge, dismounted, went forward on foot, and looked below. Just under the butte was the Bar Cross cabin. Light shone from its windows, smoke came from the pipe thrust through its roof, and men were moving about. Beyond the trees nearly surrounding the cabin the big herd of Bar Cross and Triangle cattle had been bedded down.

Lennister watched the dark forms of the men moving about for some time, but could not make out the bulky form of Trope. Finally he returned to his horse, mounted, and retraced his way down the east slope to the line of trees. He rode some distance southeast and then crossed the little stream, left the

cover of the scanty timber behind, and struck due west, riding at a fast gallop.

In half an hour he was avoiding bands of cattle, and in an hour he rode down a long coulee to the trees along the stream which flowed past the Bar Cross ranch house. Here he found a road and turned upstream, keeping a sharp lookout. He came to a fence and a gate and passed through, with a field on his right which extended to the lie of some high bluffs. He was approaching the Bar Cross ranch house.

Here he left the road and sought the shelter of the trees below the fields along the stream. After proceeding a distance of half a mile he saw a light glimmer through the branches of a windbreak of cottonwoods ahead These trees proved the eastern boundary of the big yard surrounding the house. There were numerous shrubs and a few trees in the yard below the house, and Lennister dismounted among the trees along the stream.

The lights he had seen shone from two windows of a room in the front of the house. One of these windows was on the porch side, and the other was in the side of the house toward Lennister. Two tall shrubs grew on either side of this window, and there were several shrubs between Lennister and the house in the sloping yard.

He tied his horse, hitched his gun, and ran for the shelter of the first shrub. Having gained it, he waited a few moments before continuing to the second shrub, and in this way he reached the shelter of what proved to be two large lilac bushes growing on either side of the window.

There was no stir of life about the house, and after a short period of vigil Lennister removed his hat and peered cautiously in the screened window.

The room was lighted by a shaded lamp on the table in the center. Near the table a man was sitting in an armchair, and Lennister at once recognized Frank Graham, owner of the Bar Cross, by the descriptions he had heard of him. There was no one else in the room, and the house was still.

Graham was looking at a paper, held in one hand while he tapped the arm of his chair with the fingers of his other hand nervously. In the shaded light of the lamp his face looked pasty, and the eyes colorless. He was dressed in a business suit, with collar and bow tie, and across his shirt front was a black ribbon. Lennister noted the ribbon and wondered why the ranch owner was not using his eyeglasses. But the ribbon might be attached to a watch. Lennister shrugged. A small matter.

Inspection of the room showed two doors, one at the left, evidently leading into the dining room, and the other near the front, probably and most likely leading into the hall which opened on the porch. This door interested Lennister. He took careful note of the arrangement of the various articles of furniture in the room and then slipped away from the window to the corner of the porch.

There was no sign of movement anywhere. Lennister rounded the porch and walked to its other end, where he could see the courtyard on the north side of the house. The bunk house was on the side, and the barns, almost under the bluffs. But no light showed.

He stepped lightly upon the porch, tiptoed to the screen door, opened it noiselessly, and entered the hall. The door to the room where Graham was sitting was the first on the left, as the light shining through the crack indicated.

Lennister grasped the knob, opened the door quickly, and stepped inside as Graham started up in his chair. He looked coolly into the black bore of Lennister's gun as the latter closed the door softly.

Lennister made a gesture of warning and looked closely at the Bar Cross owner.

Graham, after a long stare, motioned to a chair in front of him.

"Sit down," he said in a low voice, carrying the hint of a sneer. "I happen to know who you are, Lennister!"

CHAPTER VII.

GUNS IN THE DARK.

LENNISTER sat down without showing any surprise over the fact that Graham knew him. He balanced his gun on his knee and surveyed the Bar Cross owner at length while the latter toyed nervously with the thin silk cord on his shirt front.

"You look quite prosperous," said Lennister finally in an undertone, "dressed in those city clothes that a way. Maybe you won't forget to use your society voice while we're talking." He made a sigificant gesture to emphasize his speech.

"I suppose you're after money," said Graham in a tone of contempt. "I understand you're an alleged reformed bandit making a living by hiring out your gun. But I know better."

"Those are hard words, Graham," Lennister observed mildly.

"I expect they're true, however. I can tell you now that there isn't five hundred dollars on this ranch, but I suppose I'll have to open the safe for you to prove it."

Lennister shook his head slowly. "No, you won't have to do that, Graham. I believe you."

Graham looked puzzled, and he agitated the silk ribbon more than ever. "Then what do you want?" he demanded.

"I want to know what the play is against the Triangle," replied Lennister coolly.

"Oh! You've heard about—about our range trouble?"

It was Lennister's turn to be astonished. It was quite evident from Graham's reply and manner of speaking that he had not heard that Lennister had been employed by Connie Cameron. Trope, then, hadn't been at the home ranch since the trouble at the Triangle, nor had he sent word.

"Yes, I heard about it," he answered. "Sounds serious to me."

Graham leaned toward him and his colorless eyes now sparkled eagerly. "You came here to get on?" he asked. "To join up with the outfit?"

"You mean you want to hire my gun?" Lennister countered.

"If you want to put it that way," said Graham with a nod.

Lennister frowned. "Graham, you're just a plain skunk! You're not cow people, an' you know it. This is the first ranch you ever owned, an' you've got to have a bully an' a gun fighter to run it for you. You're just naturally mean an' contemptible an' low—an' I can prove it!"

The effect of this speech on the Bar Cross owner was to cause him to sit up, tug nervously at the black ribbon, and stare with a look in which uncertainty, fear, and anger were commingled.

"Any man who will threaten an' make war against a girl, steal her cattle, and shoot down her father, deserves shooting, Graham," said Lennister in a low, sinister voice. "I've shot men for less!"

Graham wet his lips with a dry tongue. "You—what have *you* to do with it?" he managed to get out.

"Miss Cameron hired me this afternoon as foreman of the Triangle until her father recovers an' saves you an' Trope from being charged with murder."

The Bar Cross owner seemed to bring himself together with a jerk of the shoulders. His expression changed. His eyes were coldly calculating, although his nervousness was visibly increased.

"You come here to threaten me?" he asked.

Lennister's eyes were brimming with

contempt. "I wouldn't threaten you but once, Graham, you know that."

Graham's face went a shade whiter. "Then what is it you want?" he asked.

"I just want you to know that I'm on the job for Miss Cameron," said Lennister, leaning forward in his chair so that his gaze locked with the other's. "An' I want to give you a little advice—don't sneer; I've given advice to better men than you, Graham, an' they've taken it—an' then I want to know if you want to go through with this thing."

"What do you advise?" Graham's tone was more than mildly curious.

"First I'd see that those Triangle cattle are cut out of that herd you have up north. Then I reckon I'd tell Trope to stay south of that butte an' out of Ransford. I believe I'd do *that* sure, Graham. An' I'd send that whipper-snapper, no-good, misled son of yours up to Miss Cameron to apologize on his knees, even if she wouldn't accept the apology."

Graham's eyes flashed at Lennister's last words, and Lennister sat back with a look of satisfaction.

"That hurts, eh? Gets you where your skin ain't so tough to know that the daughter of the Triangle ain't breaking her neck to link up, maybe, with the Bar Cross? You kind of went at it the wrong way, importing Trope an' all, to make those old-timers up there think you were good enough for 'em, Graham. That might be why you haven't been asked to join the Teton Association. Ever think of that?"

Again Graham's eyes blazed, and once more Lennister knew he had hit home.

"What do I care for their association?" he gritted.

Lennister smiled, but his eyes narrowed. "You're a jealous rat, Graham, besides bein' a sneaking coyote when it comes to range manners. Listen: when I have a job on my hands I start by going straight to headquarters. In this case headquarters is right here. I want to know if you want to go through with this thing, understand?"

"I understand," said Graham with an evil smile. "I quite understand that you've hired your gun and lent your black reputation to that girl up there. I'm wondering——"

"Be careful, Graham!"

"I'm wondering what the price is," Graham finished boldly.

Lennister's left hand moved in the flash of an eye, and the room echoed to the sharp sound of the slap on the rancher's mouth.

Then Graham's hand jerked at the cord, there was a flash of silver, and the house rang with the shrill notes of the whistle he blew as Lennister leaped upon him.

They went backward over the chair, Lennister's gun flying out of his hand. He grasped Graham about the body, but the rancher wrenched himself free with a display of strength Lennister had not suspected he possessed. Both leaped to their feet, and Lennister recovered his gun as Graham sprang to the table. The next instant the light was out and the room in darkness. Lennister heard a drawer of the table pulled open and jumped to grasp Graham again, anticipating his purpose. A gun blazed almost in his face and he dropped to the floor, his own weapon held ready.

For several seconds there was silence. Then came the sound of some one coming down the stairs. Lennister moved toward the door leading into the dining room. He was in shadow, but as he touched the knob, Graham's gun blazed again, and Lennister heard the bullet splinter the panel near his head. He moved back quickly along the wall to the other door, and as he threw it open, it was also opened by some one on the other side.

"He's at the door!" Graham cried. "Get him there!"

The rancher's gun spoke again, and there was another sharp report as a

gun spat fire almost in Lennister's face. Then Lennister's own weapon roared, the dark form in the doorway swung aside, and Lennister plunged through.

A man was coming up the steps, and Lennister brought his weapon's barrel crashing down on the newcomer's head. He ran to the end of the porch and leaped over. Then he sped down the yard, putting such cover as offered between himself and the house. The sharp reports of a gun came from the porch and bullets whistled their deadly message in Lennister's ears as he gained the shelter of the trees.

He found his horse and was quickly in the saddle. When he passed the windbreak of cottonwoods, shielding him from the house, he took to the road below the fields and spurred his mount to the gate. He took the time to close the gate to delay pursuit and then struck straight across the fields toward the lower end of the bluffs.

Suddenly the deep-throated ranch bell pealed its warning message on the night air. Lennister reached the shadow of the bluffs and started up the steep slope. To westward, where the bluffs met the bench land that reached northward, a glare lighted up the sky and tongues of flame shot high.

Lennister topped the last rise and, driving in his spurs, dashed eastward on the plain, watching the blaze of the signal fire over his left shoulder.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RUSE.

LENNISTER was conscious of a certain grim feeling of satisfaction as he rode swiftly across the shadowy prairie on his way back to Rattle Butte and the rendezvous with Robbins and the Triangle men. He had at least convinced Graham that he meant business, and had dispelled any illusions the Bar Cross owner might have possessed as to the ease with which he would bring the Triangle and Connie Cameron, or her father, to time. There was a faint possibility that Graham, realizing what he was up against, would draw in his guns, although Lennister—convinced that Trope was really in command—doubted such a move.

But Graham had unwittingly showed that he was incensed toward Connie Cameron and jealous of her father. He was nettled, too, because he had not been asked to join the Teton Association. Possibly he blamed Will Cameron for this, despite the fact that the Bar Cross was really south of the range governed by the association.

Lennister's suspicions that the matter of the range between the river in the north and Rattle Butte was not the cause of the trouble had proved well founded and his other surmises correct.

Furthermore, Lennister had satisfied himself that it would be necessary to protect the Triangle stock by such means as offered. Graham had ignored his reference to the driving south of the big Triangle head as stealing it, and Lennister knew that such a charge would not hold. Trope had driven away the Bar Cross cattle. He could claim he didn't know the Triangle cattle were mixed with his, that he couldn't help it, and that the Triangle outfit was welcome to come and get its stock. But Lenister knew if the Triangle beeves got on Bar Cross range south of Rattle Butte, it would be no end of trouble to get them back, and there were innumerable ways in which steers could be lost and reduced in weight—all of which would mean a financial loss to the Camerons. Lennister's thoughts now were chiefly concerned with the protecting of the Cameron property. It was, of course, the first duty of a ranch foreman, whether he be a permanent or only an acting foreman. And Lennister had worked cattle.

As he sped into the northeast toward the trees below the butte, Lennister saw

a series of swift-moving shadows on the dim western plain. His practiced eye told him at once that the shadows were riders.

"The whole outfit is slopin' for the ranch," he muttered.

It was true. The signal fire had attracted the Bar Cross men who were riding to the home ranch with all the speed their mounts would muster. Lennister reflected that it must have been a prearranged precaution; the ringing of the ranch bell called for the lighting of the fire and the calling to the ranch of all Bar Cross men who saw it. A signal that there was trouble!

The riders moved on south, and Lennister changed his course so that he rode directly north toward the butte instead of northeast in a detour. When he was within a mile of the butte, he swerved east and rode to the trees below it. Here he crossed the little creek flowing from the springs and rode up it until a horseman broke out of the cover ahead of him. It was Robbins.

"Most of 'em have gone south," said Robbins in guarded tones. "They didn't have a man on the butte, or else you fixed him; but *I* did, an' there was some sort of fire down there——"

"I know," Lennister interrupted. "There was some trouble down there." He paused and found himself wondering for the first time who it was he had had to shoot down to gain his liberty when caught between the cross-fire in the ranch-house living room.

"Anyway, their horses will be pretty well spent by the time they get there, an' they'll have to round up fresh mounts to start back on," he said impatiently. "That'll delay 'em, but we've got to work fast. The bunch in here?"

Robbins gave a low whistle, and the Triangle riders began to emerge from the shadows of the trees.

"Split 'em in two bunches," Lennister told Robbins crisply. "Take one bunch around below the butte an' I'll take the other around above. We want to get 'em by surprise. There's probably two or three riding herd on the cattle, an' the cook, anyway, in the cabin. Don't do any shootin', you fellows, if you can help it."

Robbins divided the men, and the two factions rode swiftly around the butte. Lennister saw the herders first and closed in on them just beyond the trees between the cabin and the big herd. In a moment they were surrounded and disarmed—a surly trio who said nothing and obeyed silently when told to ride ahead through the trees toward the cabin.

At the cabin, Lennister found Robbins covering the cook and another man who was speedily disarmed. Then the five prisoners were herded in the cabin.

"Get the herd up," Lennister ordered Robbins. "We're goin' to move the cattle around to the east slope of the butte an' *drive 'em up there!*"

"On top?" said Robbins, rather stupidly.

"On top," snapped Lennister. "There's plenty of room up there for the herd. There's grass an' water there. There's only one way to get up, an' a handful of men can hold that slope against an army!"

Then Lennister took charge in earnest. Many of the steers were already up and milling about uneasily. Soon all the cattle were in movement—a dark mass edging around north of the butte and up the long slope, guarded on either side by the buck brush, the only means of reaching the big table-land on top of Rattle.

Lennister put three men to packing supplies from the cabin to the top of the butte where the Triangle range cook, who had brought down the extra horses in company with Joe Curley, soon was improvising a kitchen at the western end of the pond.

Lennister did not expect the Bar Cross men to return speedily. Graham

would, of course, immediately make known the fact that he had been at the ranch. They would not expect concerted action so soon. Very likely they would send out pursuit parties to look in the bottoms and spread out in the north and east. Originally, Lennister had planned a surprise attack on the Bar Cross outfit at the butte; but, as things had turned out, it was just as well, he thought.

He did not relish the thought of the shooting at the ranch; but it would have meant death to have stayed in that room with two men shooting at him—with others on the way to help. He had promised Connie Cameron to keep his gun cold unless—well, that had been a time when a cold gun would have cut short his efforts in her behalf. And he hadn't shot to kill; there was that consolation. He shook his head in irritation and went about his tasks. What was the matter with him? Was he getting soft—and over this girl?

The moon thrust its disk of silver above the eastern horizon and aided them in their work. The herd was a moving blot, surging around the butte and up the slope. The supplies and the prisoners were taken up, and Lennister stationed a man at the southern edge of the great table-land to watch for the anticipated return of the Bar Cross outfit.

But the first gray of the dawn came, and no riders appeared from the south. Lennister was at a loss to understand it, unless it could be that there was no fresh horses immediately available at the Bar Cross, or that the men had been told to remain there and go back in the morning. At all events, the fact that Trope's outfit hadn't shown itself indicated that they were content to let the herd remain at Rattle Butte for the time being.

The sun was up and the last of the cattle were being driven up the slope to the table-land when the lookout announced that a lone rider was coming at a furious pace from the direction of the Bar Cross. Lennister rode out west of the butte and soon saw that the horseman was not heading for the butte but was going on north as fast as his horse could carry him. Lennister put the spurs to his fresh mount and galloped west to head off the mysterious horseman.

The rider saw him coming and turned a bit east to meet him, evidently thinking he was one of the Bar Cross herders who had been left with the cattle. When he discovered his mistake, he veered off; but he was too late, and Lennister closed in on him with his gun ready for any emergency.

"Where to, with such energy so early in the morning?" Lennister inquired, noting the man's hard face and cruel eyes. This rider was typical in appearance with the men of Trope's outfit. Most of them had been brought in by Trope himself, Lennister had heard, and the fact seemed significant.

"I'm on my way to the Triangle," was the surly reply.

"Yes—an' for why?" drawled Lennister.

"I ain't no orders to tell *you*," said the man with a black look.

Lennister appeared interested. "I'm glad to know you're under orders an' not on your own hook," he said meaningly. "But I'm bossin' the Triangle right at present, an' I reckon if you want to jog on up there, you'll have to tell me the lay."

The man seemed puzzled by Lennister's presence there and kept looking toward Rattle Butte where, by this time, not a head of stock was to be seen. His perplexity increased until he blurted:

"Where'd the cattle go?"

"You haven't answered my question," Lennister reminded him.

"Oh——" The man's speech trailed off in an oath. "You made off with the

cattle, eh?" he said with a shrewd look. "Well, you'll——"

"You don't figure to answer my question, I reckon," said Lennister, reaching over and jerking the man's gun out of its holster while he kept him covered. "All right, swing over this way with me an' we'll keep you handy."

"I tell you——" The man hesitated, working his lips savagely. "Look at this," he said finally. "I'm taking that to the Triangle."

He held out an envelope which he took from inside his shirt. Lennister took it and glanced at the inscription. It was addressed to "Miss Connie Cameron, Triangle Ranch."

Lennister handed it back. "Who from?" he demanded sternly.

"From the old man, since you got to know everything," was the sneering reply. "Graham told me to beat it up there as quick as I could, or sooner, an' give it to the party it's addressed to."

"All right. We'll drop over by the butte for a minute an' then I'll go with you. It might be one of those clever Bar Cross tricks," he finished with a sharp look at the messenger.

"I ain't got much time," the man grumbled. "It's important."

"No doubt. Do you know what's in it?"

"Maybe I've got an idea an' maybe I ain't. But I ain't goin' to tell you, Mister Gun Fighter."

"It doesn't make much difference since it isn't addressed to me," said Lennister, motioning the messenger to precede him on the way to the butte, and ignoring what the other had sarcastically called him. "But I know *one* thing, an' that's that you're sure goin' to deliver it!"

Robbins, who had been watching from the trees near the butte, came riding out to meet them.

Lennister drew him aside and quickly explained.

"When you have all the cattle up there, start cuttin' out the Bar Cross brand an' drive 'em down," he instructed at parting. "Keep the Triangle herd up there an' hold the butte!"

A minute later he was riding at a fast gallop for the Triangle, with Graham's messenger.

CHAPTER IX.

A SHOCK.

THERE was little said on that ride from Rattle Butte to the Triangle. The Bar Cross messenger kept darting surreptitious glances at Lennister, but the latter paid no attention to him whatever. It was plain to Lennister, however, that the man knew who he was; that Trope had doubtless spread his description among his outfit, probably with certain definite instructions and warnings. There were questions Lennister would have liked to ask the man, but he realized that it would do little good, since he could hardly compel the man to answer under the circumstances, or depend on the answers he might make.

Thus they rode in silence, Lennister retaining possession of the messenger's weapon, and watching him covertly. It lacked an hour and a half of noon when they arrived at the Triangle and dismounted in the courtyard, turning the horses over to one of the wounded men there who was able to get about and look after the barn.

Lennister led the way to the front of the house and Connie Cameron came out the front door as they reached the steps.

Lennister met her look of surprise with a warning contraction of his brows. "This man comes from the Bar Cross," he explained, "an' brings a letter he says is from Graham."

The messenger fumbled at his shirt, forgetting to take off his hat, and finally handed up the envelope.

"We'll go into the office," Connie decided, leading the way into the house.

She sat down at her father's desk while the messenger stood just within

the door with Lennister a step behind him.

Connie broke open the envelope, took out a sheet of note paper, and quickly scanned what was written upon it. Lennister saw her hands tremble and her face go white. When she lifted her eyes, it was not to look at the messenger, but at him; and he thought her gaze was brimming with disappointment and accusation. She read the note a second time, and then crumpled it in her hand.

"You will go to the bunk house and wait until everything is ready for you to start back," she told the messenger. "Your horse will need some rest, and I'll have something sent out to you to eat." Her tone was not hospitable, and she rose impulsively as the man went out.

"Why—*why* did you do it?" she said with a catch in her voice as she looked steadily at Lennister and tossed the crumpled note before him on the table.

He picked it up calmly, smoothed it out, and read:

MISS CAMERON: Your man Lennister broke into my house last night and shot Claude. I have sent to town for the doctor, but I understand that the physician was at your place and may still be there. If he is there, maybe you will be human enough to send him back with my man. I congratulate you on having a man so ready to carry out your orders.

FRANK GRAHAM.

Lennister also read the note twice. Claude! Her orders? His eyes narrowed and flashed. So Claude was the one who had come to the door shooting; and Graham was sufficiently mean and despicable to convey the impression that he believed Connie Cameron had sent him—Lennister—to the Bar Cross to shoot Claude Graham!

"Miss Connie, do you believe that?" Lennister asked slowly.

"Isn't it true?" she countered in an unsteady voice.

"I reckon I didn't ask just the question I had in mind—I mean—well, ma'am, it's true I shot a man down there last night."

"After promising me what you did?" she said dully.

"I don't remember promising that a way,' he protested. "I want to ask one thing, Miss Cameron, before I say any more. Do you trust me at *all?* If you didn't trust me, why did you send for me?"

"But—but after this," she faltered. "I shouldn't have told you about that silly business with Claude," she continued with spirit. "I might have *known!* What will people say? They all know in town that Claude and I had a difference at the dance, and that it nearly brought about a clash between the Bar Cross and the Triangle. Now they'll say I sent for you to come and shoot Claude!"

She seemed on the verge of tears, and Lennister's face was an unnatural gray through its coating of healthy tan.

"An' it might be hard to prove that they lie," he said, "but I want *you* to know the truth first. I went down there to see Graham an' maybe find out a few things by the way he talked. I got what I wanted, an' I know that it's jealousy an' not the north range that's bothering him. An' I know Trope's got him between thumb an' finger an' that it's Trope we're fighting."

"And just how does that help matters any?" she asked in a stronger voice. "Oh, if father could only speak—could only tell who shot him!"

"He will, sooner or later," Lennister reassured her. "At the end of our talk Graham pulled out a whistle an' blew it. I tried to stop him, an' we went to the floor. He got up an' blew out the light. Then the shooting started with him blazin' at me there in the dark room. Somebody came down the stairs an' when I tried to get out the door a gun was spittin' fire in my face an' another was barking behind my back. I shot the man in the door high on the right—

to stop him. I knocked another down on the porch. Then I beat it with bullets playin' a tune on the wind. I had little time to think, ma'am, an' I didn't know that man in the door was Claude. If I'd known it was him I might have stood an' took it on your account."

For the space of a minute she looked at him steadily, and finally he saw that she believed him.

"Oh, Lennister!" she said tremuously as she sank into a chair. "Can't—can't troubles like this be settled without bloodshed?"

"Not when there is a man like Trope mixed up in it, Miss Connie. I thought I might be able to scare Graham out of it; but Trope's got him buffaloed into thinking that his gun makes right, I reckon. I know the breed, ma'am. He's more dangerous than an out-an'-out killer, for he's under cover—Trope, I mean. I'm afraid I'm goin' to have to meet Trope, Miss Connie, if I stay on the job!"

She looked at him startled. "I—don't want——" Her speech died away before the grim expression in his eyes.

"If I leave, Miss Connie, they'll ride you to death," he continued gravely. "I started with the idea that I could make it by takin' 'em by surprise an' gettin' the cattle back that way. But it looks worse at every turn. Graham wants certain social readjustments, I take it, an' he wants your dad under his submission. Trope wants to teach the Triangle a lesson, as I suppose he looks at it, an' I wouldn't be surprised if he wanted more than that. I wouldn't put it past Trope to run off those beeves with those cutthroats he's got workin' for him—if he could. A man like that will play any kind of a game, ma'am."

The girl's eyes were flashing again. "He shot my father!" she exclaimed. "I know it—I just *know it!*"

"Whoever shot him, shot to kill," said Lennister soberly. Then, as Connie's eyes clouded again: "I'm just tryin' to show you the situation," he said hastily. "An' I'm afraid my coming hasn't helped things any so far as Trope is concerned. After all that's happened, Graham might quit. But Trope hates me worse than poison since I've butted into his game. *He* won't stop, an' if I leave he won't forget I was here."

Lennister's words carried regret, and the girl saw a new expression on his face that caused her to wonder.

"Where are the men?" she asked.

"At Rattle Butte. We drove the cattle to the top of the butte this mornin'. I told Robbins to cut out the Bar Cross brands up there an' drive 'em down, but to keep the Triangle stuff there till we get a chance to move 'em back up this way. The butte is on Blue Dome Range, Miss Connie, an' if you wanted to put it up to the association, I reckon they'd see that the cattle got back all right."

"Father wouldn't appeal to the association, and *I* won't," she said with spirit. "I'll wait until he can talk again, anyway. The doctor says he should be out of his delirium to-night, and then after he has had some sleep he can talk just a little. He would never forgive me if I went against his wishes while he is helpless."

"Then I reckon we'd better think it over after dinner," said Lennister in a tired voice. "I'm goin' to the bunk house for an hour's sleep, since I missed out last night an' had only a half ration the night before."

He smiled wanly, and the girl put a hand on his arm.

"Lennister, I *do* believe you and—trust you," she said softly, and then hurried down the hall.

When he awoke he found he had slept four hours, and that it was nearly three o'clock. He got out of his bunk hurriedly, noting that the Bar Cross messenger, who had been there when he had entered, had gone.

Connie Cameron called to him from

the kitchen door when he went into the courtyard.

"Come in, I've kept some dinner for you," she said cheerfully.

When he had finished eating she came in and told him that her father was sleeping and had passed the crisis.

"The doctor will be back from the Bar Cross this evening. He went with the man who brought the note right after dinner."

She had hardly finished speaking when the thunder of hoofs came from the bench trail and a number of riders dashed into the courtyard. They both moved swiftly to the window and saw Sheriff Strang dismounting.

CHAPTER X.

CONNIE ACTS.

CONNIE looked quickly at Lennister with apprehension. His eyes had narrowed, and his gaze was steel-blue. There was just a flash of that terrible look of which she knew he was capable, and of which she was afraid. It was like playing with fire—trying to handle this man.

"I reckon they're after me," he said in a low, grim tone.

"Wait!" she said, grasping his arm. "You stay here and let me talk to him. Do as I say, Lennister, it's—it's orders."

He remained standing back from the window with his face toward the door where she disappeared into the hall. He heard her greet the sheriff and take him into the little front office. He moved to the door where he could hear what was said. For some moments after they entered the office there was silence, then:

"Miss Cameron, I didn't think you would do a thing like this," said the sheriff in his official voice.

"Like what, sheriff?" the girl asked, almost impudently.

"We can't take this lightly, Miss Cameron," said Strang severely. "It is a serious matter. I thought it was funny—you sending for this gunman, Lennister—but I didn't think you had enough of a grudge against Claude Graham to send for a gun fighter to get him."

Lennister could imagine the angry flush on Connie's face.

"You think I did that, sheriff?" she asked quietly.

"Everything points that way." There was no uncertainty or uneasiness in Strang's voice this day. "Anyway, the thing has been done and—you said you would be responsible. I shall have to hold you responsible with Lennister."

"Suppose you hold me and me alone responsible," was the girl's astonishing retort.

"I see that you don't deny the—the complication," said Strang. "Well, perhaps that's best. Any one hereabouts will sympathize with you, Miss Cameron, considering the worry you have had and your state of mind. It may be that this fellow Lennister has taken advantage of you; in fact, I believe that's just about the way of it."

"No one has taken advantage of me, sheriff," said Connie coldly, "unless it is Graham and his outfit. And I'm not looking for sympathy. What is your business here?"

"I want Lennister and—I guess it will be necessary for you to drop into town, too, Miss Cameron. Oh, not to-day, of course; but some day when your father is better."

"Has Graham made another complaint?" asked the girl sweetly.

"He has, and I can't say that I blame him," replied Strang sternly. "When a man breaks into another's house and shoots——"

"Lennister didn't break into any house," Connie broke in impatiently. "He went down there to try to reason with Graham. While they were talking, Graham blew a whistle, put the light out, and started shooting at Lennister.

Then a man came downstairs to the door and started shooting also. Lennister only shot once, and he didn't know it was Claude, or he probably wouldn't have shot at all. What would you do if you were caught in a room with two men peppering away at you with their guns?"

"That's a pretty story, but that's about all," said Strang in a tone of irritation. "I suppose Lennister came back and told that as his alibi?"

"Yes. Lennister told me that," Connie affirmed.

"Assuming that you didn't send him down there to shoot Claude," said the sheriff, clearing his throat officiously, "do you believe him?"

"I do," answered the girl stoutly.

"Then neither he nor you deny that he shot Claude Graham?"

"We don't deny it," replied Connie after a moment's pause.

For the space of half a minute there was silence, and the frown on Lennister's face darkened. He shifted from one foot to the other uneasily, and listened.

"I think it's best you went into town and made a deposition to that effect, Miss Cameron," said the sheriff at length.

"What—now? To-day?" The girl's tone was startled.

"In the absence of Lennister—yes," replied Strang.

Lennister stepped quickly through the door and down the hall to the door of the office. Strang leaped to his feet and jerked out his gun.

"It won't be necessary, sheriff," said Lennister calmly, "I'm not absent." He looked with a glimmer of amusement in his eyes at the gun in the sheriff's hand. "You might as well put that up, sheriff; you look awkward, holding it that a way."

"You're my prisoner!" Strang blurted. "I *want* you."

"So I gathered from your remarks," said Lennister dryly. "There's only one thing, sheriff." His look changed on the instant. "I'll go along with you on one condition, an' that's that you leave Miss Cameron out of it. Understand? Out of it entirely."

"You're taking the blame then," said Strang with a scowl. "I dare say it'll be where it belongs."

"You've said it," said Lennister whimsically. "I'm takin' the blame. It's up to you to prove the rest of it. You're all wrong, sheriff, when you say that Miss Connie sent me down there. She didn't. An' she didn't know I was going. I went down there to see Graham, an' the rest of it happened. That's enough for you. Does it let her out?" The question came like the crack of a whiplash.

Strang looked at him for some moments. "Yes, it lets her out," he said at last.

"Clear out?" Lennister persisted.

"Clear out," snapped Strang. "You have my word for it."

With a swift movement which caused the sheriff to raise his gun quickly, Lennister unbuckled his gun belt and laid it with its weapon on the table.

"Lennister!" It was Connie Cameron; but she caught herself and turned to the sheriff with a white face.

"He is still in my employ—*our* employ," she said spiritedly. "How much is his bail?"

Strang smiled a grim, cheerless smile. "It'll be as high as I can get 'em to make it," he said. "Five thousand, anyway—an' cash. That's providing I can't get them to hold him."

"But Claude isn't seriously shot, and he was shot in another county," Connie contended.

Strang shook his head. "The Bar Cross ranch house itself is in the dip in the southwest corner of Blue Dome county," he declared. "Most of the Bar Cross Range isn't, but the *house* is. And we don't know how bad young

Graham is shot, yet." He gathered up Lennister's belt and gun.

"Are you ready?" he asked sternly.

"Any time," replied Lennister, and his smile caused the sheriff to watch him carefully as they joined the posse in the courtyard and waited until a man brought his horse.

Lennister looked back at Connie Cameron just once as she stood on the porch, and smiled at him.

She watched them ride up the road to the bench and disappear in a cloud of dust. After they had gone, and the dust cloud had dissolved, and the place was once more quiet save for the breathing of the wind in the cottonwoods, she still stood staring at the blue rim of the sky. Finally she went into the office.

For a spell she stood by the table, tapping its surface listlessly. Then she sat down in her father's swivel chair. She had a feeling that she was utterly and completely alone. But she did not feel sorry for herself; nor did she feel any particular interest in the affairs of the ranch at that moment. It was of Lennister's smile that she thought—and the look in his eyes. Little as she understood him, she could realize what the loss of his liberty had meant to him. If it hadn't been that he wanted to protect her, she doubted if the sheriff and all his men could have taken him. She had sent for him, and it had come to this. She believed him when he said he had tried to keep from using his gun. She trusted him now.

Five thousand dollars!

Connie came to herself with a start. Her gaze had been centered on the small safe in the office beside the desk. She looked around almost furtively. In that safe was five thousand dollars belonging to the Teton Stockmen's Association. Ten thousand had been placed there some time before to cover the rewards for the capture of Blodgett and his rustling band. It had been Lennister who had broken up the band and disposed of Blodgett. But he had taken only the five thousand. He had refused the added five thousand offered by the association. The money had since reposed in the safe. In a way it really had belonged to him. Joe Curley had said something about having heard that Lennister had had a run of hard luck in the town in the north—lost a lot of money in some way, cards perhaps. His five thousand was doubtless most gone. He was entitled to be bailed out of jail with the five thousand he could have had for the asking, she argued to herself. And, anyway, she—her father or the Triangle—were good for the money. Why not?

The idea disturbed her, kept her thinking until the arrival of the doctor at dinner time. He brought the news that Claude Graham was hit in the shoulder and that it was not serious. Connie remembered that Lennister had said he had shot "high on the right," and her heart sang.

After supper the doctor told her that it was his intention to drive back into town.

"Your father will be rational when he wakes up," he told her, "and the housekeeper knows what to do. Feed him light and let him rest—that's the prescription. I'll be out again to-morrow to look in on him. And, listen, Connie"—and patted her on the shoulder. "I guess I've got some news you'll be glad to hear," he went on. "It's about Claude Graham. He's sorry, child—very sorry. He made me promise to tell you so. He said he meant it, too, when he came up here yesterday morning to see you—meant that he wanted to help you because he was ashamed of the way he acted in town, but he guessed he didn't use the right words."

Connie felt something swell in her throat as she listened.

"He isn't all bad," the doctor continued. "I guess that fellow Trope has had a bad influence over him. He told

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me this in snatches, as if he was afraid somebody there would hear him. He said his father had some queer ideas, but that he was going to tell him a few things." The doctor nodded wisely.

"Acted right spirited," he declared. "Made me promise not to tell anybody but you, Miss Connie, and then whispered in my ear that Lennister wasn't to blame. Said he'd try to make it right soon as he got everything straight, and to tell you he was sorry, and I guess he is, if I know anything about humans."

Connie bade him good-by with shining eyes and went up to find that her father was sleeping peacefully.

The man from the Bar Cross, who had ridden back with the doctor as a courtesy to the physician from Graham, finished his supper in the deserted bunk house and strolled under the trees, smoking, preparatory to going back to the ranch in the south.

Connie Cameron came out on the porch and stood for some time staring, unseeing, at the last crimson gleams of the sunset. Lennister wasn't to blame! Of course not! He had as much as said so himself, and she had believed him. She was glad of that. He *had* tried to keep his gun cold; had risked his life in the effort to keep his promise to her. And he had taken all the blame to protect her. True, that was no more than right under the circumstances; but another kind of a man would have found it easy to evade it.

"I'm going to get Lennister back!" she exclaimed aloud subconsciously.

She hurried into the house and quickly changed into her riding clothes. Then, making sure that the housekeeper did not see her, she slipped down to the little office and closed the door. There was just enough light so that she could see the combination dial of the safe. She turned the dial rapidly, her breath coming fast. At last the door of the safe swung open. She drew out a packet and thrust it within her jacket. As she closed the safe, a shadow moved from the window toward the corral, where a saddled horse was standing, and soon the horse was bearing a rider west through the fields in the bottoms, while the girl whispered her purpose to go to town in the ears of the astonished housekeeper.

CHAPTER XI.

DISASTER.

DUSK had fallen, and the sky was sprinkled with stars, when Connie Cameron rode out upon the bench and headed for Ransford. Her mount was fresh and eager, the air was cool and stimulating, and there was a wild exultation in her heart. Every fiber of her healthy young body—every nerve—responded to the cut of the crisp wind, the rhythmic play of her horse's muscles, the beauty of the calm prairie night. It was like drifting through a fairyland of starlight and shadow, and the white tracks of the road were like silver rails leading to some mysterious happy haven.

She thrilled with the thought that she was bent on a mission that concerned a man's liberty. To turn Lennister out under the stars he loved! Could a man be thoroughly bad and love the perfume of lilacs? She knew better. That last look out of the gray eyes as he had waved farewell had told her much, after all. She felt thrilled, strangely lighthearted, exhilarated with her own thoughts, and she tossed contemplation of the reason for them to the scented night wind and rode on.

Some five miles from the ranch house the road swung down toward the river, where it was joined by another road from the south. There were a few cottonwoods at this place—tall, graceful shadows with their tops weaving among the stars, it seemed.

As she neared this spot, where the road turned sharply into the northwest and led directly to town, she peered

ahead with more than ordinary attentiveness. She could see between the trunks of the trees, and yet she would have been ready to swear she had seen one of those trees move. It moved again—*two* of them moved! But no—it wasn't the trees. There were other shadows there! And then she swerved sharply to the right, out of the road—but too late.

The shadows came hurtling out from under the branches, and she saw the sharp outlines of two horses and riders. Her spurs sank into the flanks of her horse, and the gallant animal lunged ahead, but the shadows crossed before her and closed in. Her horse snorted and shied from one side to the other, and then slowed down as the riders swung hard in and one of them leaned from his saddle and caught her bridle rein.

With all her might Connie brought her quirt down upon the man's forearm and drew a curse. She felt herself grasped about the waist, and next instant she was dragged from the saddle and was held, despite her struggles, against the saddle and leg of the other rider. She struck out to no avail, and sobbed with the thought that she had no weapon.

The other rider had dismounted, and now he came running to the assistance of his companion. He took her in a grip of iron, pinned her arms to her sides, while his companion flung himself from his horse, tore open her jacket, and secured the package of bills she had taken from the Triangle safe. She caught a glimpse of their faces, and saw that they were masked with handkerchiefs.

The man who held her suddenly flung her to the ground. She rose with a choking cry of angry despair. Her accosters were in their saddles, riding away. She stood helpless, white-faced, her hands clenched so hard that the knuckles were white, and watched the robbers disappear beyond the cottonwoods. The sharp echoes of flying hoofs dulled, died away, and the night was still.

For just one minute Connie remained standing there, a mist in her eyes; then she mastered the impulse to cry with chagrin—to call futilely for help. The thing had been done—and not a word had been spoken. Some one must have known, of course. And next she remembered the Bar Cross man who had accompanied the doctor back to the Triangle. She hadn't seen him since before supper. But he might have walked about at will, for there were but two men at the ranch—the slightly wounded man who was looking after the barn, and the other wounded man who was lying in the bunk house. She bit her lip in perplexity as she went to her horse and mounted. The second man could not be accounted for, unless—no, the man with the doctor had had no companion.

She turned back to the ranch, for there was no use in going into town without the cash with which to give bond for Lennister. It would gain her nothing to go in and report the robbery. And suddenly she was struck by the realization that she didn't want any one to know of the robbery. It wasn't Triangle money she had taken! Her imagination and excited reasoning had caused her to think she had a right to take it for the purpose she had in mind. But how could she explain it? Her father would have to know when he was better. He would understand and attend to it. The Triangle would have to pay it, of course. A lump came into Connie's throat.

She put her horse in the barn, and when she entered the house the housekeeper was startled by her pallor.

"Started too soon to suit my supper," she explained lamely. Then, to change the subject: "How is father?"

"He's awake," replied the housekeeper. "You better go to bed, dearie.

That's a good girl. You've had too much to think about."

But Connie disregarded the elder woman's advice and hurried up to her father's room.

Her father lay motionless in the great, white bed, the soft rays of the shaded lamp lending a mother-of-pearl transparency to his face. His eyes turned to Connie as she went to the bedside, bent over and kissed his forehead. She stroked his hands and smoothed the pillows and coverings. He kept his eyes on her—great, glowing orbs full of meaning under the white bandage about his head. Then he opened his mouth and she bent low to catch the murmured words:

"Trope—shot—me."

Connie straightened with a flash in her eyes. Then she put a cool finger against his lips.

"Yes, daddy," she soothed. "We know. But everything is all right. You must rest and get strong, and not think about it now."

His eyes fastened on hers imploringly. "The—cattle?" he whispered.

"They are all safe," said Connie. "Robbins has our herd intact. There is nothing to worry over or think about now, daddy. Just close your eyes and rest—*please,* daddy."

Her father did close his eyes while she sat by the bedside holding one of his hands. Soon his regular breathing told her that he was again asleep. The housekeeper came in to take up her vigil, and Connie went out.

On the little balcony over the porch Connie stood, looking at the stars, thinking—thinking.

It seemed to her that her brain was growing numb with her problem. Every instinct of her wild young nature—reverted now to the primitive instincts she had inherited—were aroused. It *had* been Trope who had shot her father; it had been Trope who had filed the complaints with the sheriff; it had been Trope, doubtless, who had instigated Claude Graham's visit to the dance hall; it had been Trope who had threatened the Triangle men in town that night. What would his next move be? And now the five thousand dollars had been stolen and she had every reason to believe that a Bar Cross man was the thief. Trope, himself, might be implicated. And she was alone on the ranch! She had felt safe, secure with Lennister in charge. He understood. To whom could she turn now?

She heard a horse canter into the courtyard, and, looking down from the end of the balcony, saw a rider dismounting. She hurried down to find Joe Curley approaching the kitchen door. She invited him in, and at once noticed his grave face—its wrinkles showing deeper than ever; the eyes worried and tired.

"Robbins sent me," he explained. "We cut out the Bar Cross brand an' drove 'em down on the prairie. The Triangle herd is on top the butte. Graham sent word we could move our cattle north. Robbins thinks it's a trick, because the whole Bar Cross outfit, almost, is camped east of the butte. I had to sneak away to get up here. Where's—Lennister?"

Connie thought rapidly. To send word that Lennister had been taken by the sheriff might dishearten Robbins and the others. She did not know what to think of Graham's message. Had Claude exercised whatever influence he had with his father? And the presence of the Bar Cross outfit there did not look good. It might be a trick, as Robbins suspected. Connie stared at the little wrangler as her thoughts raced to a daring conclusion.

"Robbins was wonderin' when Lennister would be back," Joe said uneasily.

"Tell him that Lennister will be back in the morning," said Connie slowly. "And tell him not to move the cattle until Lennister comes."

"I'll be hurryin' back, Miss Connie," said Joe simply. .

Connie saw to it that he got a fresh mount, then she went into the house again and stole upstairs to her father's room. He was asleep, and the housekeeper was lying on a cot which had been put in the room for her accommodation. She seemed asleep also, and Connie tiptoed to the closet, took down her father's gun belt and weapon, and slipped out of the room.

In the office downstairs, Connie took the cartridges out of the belt and put them in her pockets. Then she strapped the big weapon under her jacket and left the house. For the second time that night she rode up the bench trail and started for Ransford. She did not follow the road this time, but cut straight across the prairie, keeping the rising moon at her back, in an airline for town.

The gun pressed against her side cruelly as she rode, and finally she took it out and held it in her hand as she sped on her way. It was past midnight when she finally caught the faint glimmer of a light far ahead and saw the shadow of the cottonwoods about Ransford. Her heart came into her throat as she raced toward her goal. Could she do it? Could she hold up the sheriff or jailer and compel the release of Lennister? For the first time since she had made her resolve to free him by the only means that offered, she felt a numbing sense of misgiving. Could she do it? The question rang in her mind to the pound of her horse's hoofs. And then she reached the road, where it crossed the stream and ended in the short street of the town.

She concealed the gun quickly within her jacket and rode, without looking to either side, to the hotel barn. There she left her horse with instructions not to remove the saddle. She wanted to rest the animal, and to have time in which to think. She went into the hotel, dimly lit by a single lamp in the small lobby, and turned into the dark, deserted parlor. There she sat in a chair by the window, where she could look up the street.

Light flowed from the windows of the Rodeo resort and another place which she surmised was a small café. Otherwise the street was dark. She could not see the jail, which was at the upper end of the street, set back somewhat from the line of buildings.

For an hour she sat there, going over her plans, and then her pale face was lit by a faint smile. Lennister would know what to do!

Another hour she waited, and then she stole out and around to the barn. The barn man was not about—sleeping, probably, in the little front office. She made her way in the dim light to Spot's stall, spoke to him, and led him out. She tightened the saddle cinch and mounted. Avoiding the street, she picked her way along behind the buildings until she was at the upper end. In the shadow of the east side of the last building she dismounted and left Spot's reins dangling so he would stand. The jail was on the opposite side of the street.

She made her way to it and boldly entered the lighted office. One man was there, sitting in a chair with his feet propped on the desk. He got to his feet with a startled exclamation as she came in. He wasn't the sheriff, she saw at a glance; a deputy or the jailer, likely.

"I wish to speak for a few moments with my acting foreman, Lennister," she said coolly. "I am Miss Cameron of the Triangle. It is—ranch business."

The man removed his hat a bit awkwardly. "I—don't know about that, Miss Cameron. The sheriff left orders that nobody was to see your man."

"I hardly believe the sheriff had any idea *I* would come to see him," said Connie with a winning smile. "I told the sheriff, though, that I intended to bail him out. Father has recovered consciousness, and it is necessary that I con-

sult with Lennister. I won't be a minute," she added in a pleading tone.

The jailer frowned. He had a great deal of respect for Will Cameron's position in the community, and Connie's smile and supplicating voice were hard to resist.

"You want to see him alone, I suppose?" It seemed a senseless question; yet he had to be careful.

"For just a minute," said Connie sweetly. "But I don't have to go into his—his cell—of course. You could leave the door open. There—there has been some new trouble," she said in a different tone, which signified that she was at her wits' end. "I—I want his advice." She seemed on the point of tears, and the jailer stepped hastily forward.

As he swung his keys and moved toward the door leading into the jail proper, Connie thanked her stars for the experience she had had in amateur theatricals at school.

But he hesitated at the door. She had followed him with an eager look in her eyes. "I *thought* you would be kind enough," she said. "And afterward I will be at the hotel until morning, if the sheriff wants to see me, and I suppose he will."

Her trusting voice and earnest look decided the jailer, and the door swung open.

"In the corner cell," he said, pointing along the corridor.

Connie hurried to the cell as Lennister rose from the bunk and stepped to the barred door.

"Robbins doesn't know what to do with the cattle down there," she began hurriedly; but a hasty look over her shoulder showed that the jailer had stepped back into the front office.

Her hand went through the bars to grip Lennister's. He was looking at her in wonder. Then she spoke swiftly, telling him about Claude's message, of the word Robbins had sent, and last of the loss of the five thousand.

"It will be all right about you," she whispered finally. "But we're losing time. They are up to some trick down there. You must get out—do you hear, Lennister?" Her breath came in short gasps in her excitement. "You—must get out."

She was taking the cartridges from her pockets, cramming them into his hands. Then, after a quick glance down the corridor, she took out the gun and passed it to him. Instantly it was inside his shirt. No one knew; the few other prisoners were in the other part of the jail; the jailer was in the office.

"My horse is across the street at the side of a building," she whispered.

"Go to the hotel and wait for me," he told her in a low voice. "Do as I say, Connie."

She nodded, looked at him breathlessly for a spell, then hurried along the corridor and cut into the office.

"Thank you," she said to the jailer with a smile. "And now I'm going to the hotel."

He opened the street door to let her out.

CHAPTER XII.

AT RATTLE BUTTE.

THE jailer came into the corridor, and Lennister called to him softly. He walked down to Lennister's cell and inspected him curiously for the third time since midnight, when the sheriff had left him in charge of the jail.

"There's a right smart breeze drifting in through that window up there," said Lennister, pointing to the open window in the wall at the end of the corridor. "I reckon his nibs the sheriff wouldn't want his pet prisoner to catch cold." He grinned affably.

The jailer took a pole in the corner and closed the window. Then he turned back to the cell, and as Lennister retreated to the farther end, he drew close against the bars—something he had been careful not to do on his previous visits.

"Listen, friend," said Lennister, turning and holding the other's gaze with his eyes. "Before you can step away from that door, I can drop you. Reach through an' get your keys, an' *beat it!*"

The jailer's jaw dropped and his eyes bulged with astonishment. He was unable to move in the moment of complete surprise.

"Sure," he mumbled finally, with a grin he meant to be mirthful. "Easiest thing in the world to get out of here." He laughed shortly, holding to the bars with both hands and peering with a puzzled frown at Lennister, who stood with his hands on his hips.

Lennister smiled, too. Then he began to pace back and forth at the rear of the cell while the jailer eyed him steadily, a captive to his insatiable curiosity concerning this man of such a sinister reputation.

On his third turn Lennister suddenly whirled, and his hand came out from within his shirt holding the gun Connie Cameron had brought him. Its black muzzle covered the jailer as Lennister spoke in a low, hissing voice.

"I mean it! *Don't move!*"

The jailer might have been paralyzed so far as he was capable of movement at that moment. He saw only the gun and Lennister's gleaming eyes above it, the narrowed lids, the stern set of the chin; thought only of what he had heard —what the sheriff had told him—that Lennister was desperate, dangerous, and a killer!

Lennister stepped swiftly toward him. "Don't take your hands from those bars!" he commanded. "I'm goin' out of here, my friend, an' you might as well take it sensibly. I reckon if you've got any brains at all, now's a good time to use 'em."

Keeping the jailer covered, he reached through and took his keys, tearing the chain to which they were attached free from his belt. He stepped back, and in the wink of an eye had transferred the gun to his left hand, the keys to his right. He chose one he had noticed in particular when he had been locked in. It would have been hard to forget that key.

"Step back two paces," Lennister ordered sharply. "Honest, fellow, if you start down that corridor, I'll let you have it!"

The jailer's face was pale as he obeyed. It was plain that he was more frightened than chagrined or worried over what the sheriff might say or do.

Lennister reached through the bars with his right hand, inserted the key in the primitive lock, and turned it. Next the cell door swung open, and he stepped lightly into the corridor. He motioned to the jailer with his gun.

"Get in there," he snapped. "Do you *hear* me?"

The jailer sidled into the cell and Lennister closed the door and locked it, thrusting the keys in his pocket. Then, having learned just how it was done, he took the pole from the corner of the corridor near the cell, walked around to the other side, and closed the other windows. Then he returned to the cell, where the jailer, angry and belligerent now, stood glaring through the bars.

"I trusted that girl," the jailer blurted.

"Fair enough," said Lennister. "You don't know all the circumstances. The sheriff doesn't know 'em. This game is too deep for you hombres. Time counts, an' that's why I've got to do this. Now with those windows closed an' the doors shut, you can just naturally yell your head off without it doin' you a speck of good. So long."

He went out the door into the office, closing it and locking it after him. A quick inspection of the drawers of the desk revealed his own gun belt and weapon. He put them on. Then he slipped out the door into the street, crossed to the opposite side, mounted Connie's horse, and rode back down behind the buildings on that side.

Connie Cameron—her thoughts torn between elation and dire misgiving—waited nervously in the darkened parlor of the hotel. Would Lennister get out? Would he shoot down the jailer? She shuddered at the thought. But she didn't believe he would adopt such a drastic measure. She was wise enough to construct in her own mind just such a scene as actually took place within the jail. She believed Lennister would get out; that he would hurry to the butte to direct things there; and that, in some way, he would recover the association's five thousand dollars. She flushed as she considered the extent to which she depended on this acknowledged gunman, and the trust she reposed in him. And then there came a tapping at the window.

She looked out and recognized Lennister's tall form at once. She hurried out of the deserted lobby and joined him at the side of the building. Without a word he took her arm and led her toward the barn, past it into the cottonwoods. There she found two horses, her own and—Lennister's!

"You forgot that I rode in," whispered Lennister. "The sheriff put my horse in the barn. I got him out an' saddled him without waking the barn man. Climb up an' follow me."

Connie's breath came fast with excitement as they walked their horses through the trees to the upper end of town and crossed the creek. Then, with the screen of cottonwoods to the right of them, Lennister led the way southeastward across the moonlit reaches of prairie.

He set a fast pace, and they rode silently, save for the dull sounds of the flying hoofs in the bunch grass. Connie shook off her misgivings. Let the sheriff take what action he saw fit! He would know, of course, when he heard the jailer's story, that she had brought the gun to Lennister. Little she cared! With her father abed as the result of Trope's bullet; with the cattle still threatened—a thousand head of beef steers at stake!—and with five thousand dollars stolen, what other course should she have pursued? To expect action from the authorities was foolish. To appeal to the association would take time and allow Trope to put through any scheme he had in mind.

They arrived at the junction of the road from the ranch and the other from the south. Lennister drew rein.

"You'd best go on to the ranch, Miss Connie," he told her.

Connie looked at his stern face in the moonlight. "Where are *you* going, Lennister?" she asked, although she knew what his answer would be.

"I'm goin' south," he replied. "I reckon when the sheriff finds out what happened, he'll head straight for the ranch. But that'll be some time in the morning. He won't wait there long. He'll come on after me." His tone was ironical.

Connie's eyes flashed, and she drew a long breath. "I'm going with you, Lennister!" she announced.

He eyed her in astonishment. "But it won't do any good, Miss Connie," he protested. "You'd only be taking a chance an' be in the way—don't you see?"

"You're going to Rattle Butte?" she asked, businesslike.

"I reckon that's my first stop," Lennister answered.

"And I'm going to the Bar Cross," said Connie in a determined voice. "I'm going to hear what Claude Graham has to say from his own lips, and I'm going to find out if Graham meant it when he sent word to Robbins that he could take the cattle back without being molested. If I can't ride part of the way with you, Lennister, I'll ride all the way alone!"

Lennister frowned and argued, but Connie refused to change her mind or to retreat from her purpose.

"All right," said Lennister in a nettled tone at last, "let's go."

They rode steadily southward in the hour before dawn. When they were west of the butte, Lennister called a halt and considered the girl gravely. "I don't like to let you go on down there alone," he said in a puzzled voice, "although I don't reckon Trope's there."

"I can take care of myself," said Connie tartly. "Since you've got your own gun, you might give me dad's."

Lennister's eyes sparkled with admiration as he handed her the weapon. But the frown of perplexity returned immediately. Then, from the east, came the distant echo of a shot. He stiffened in the saddle. There came another echo—and another. They were shooting at Rattle Butte.

Lennister looked at the girl quickly. "That shows where Trope is," he said. "I've got to slope over there. I can't leave you here. I——"

"You'll have to hurry!" cried Connie. "And don't bother about me."

She drove in her spurs and galloped southward. After a moment or two of indecision, Lennister struck due east toward the butte. He rode like the wind, edging a bit to the south to keep the butte and the trees between himself and the Bar Cross men whom he suspected were on the east side of Rattle. He heard no more shots, and reached the grove of trees under the west wall of the butte safely. There he dismounted and looked up the sheer side of the butte toward the top. A tall cottonwood grew close to the wall. He took his rope from the saddle, threw it over the lowest limb, and quickly pulled himself up into the tree.

When he reached the highest branch that would support his weight, he could see the overhanging bushes some distance above him. He whistled. It seemed out of reason that there would not be a lookout on the west side of the butte, and that the lookout should fail to see him as he rode from the west. He whistled again and again shrilly. He knew it would be next to impossible to reach the top of the butte by the east slope, for it was undoubtedly watched both from below and above. Even if he started up it, the Triangle men would be most liable to mistake him for one of the Bar Cross outfit. These thoughts were forgotten the next instant, however, when he received an answer to his signal.

He called his name loudly. "It's Lennister. Throw down a rope, do you hear me? A rope. Tie it to something up there, so I can climb up."

He caught an answering voice, and after what seemed a wait of hours, the end of a rope came down and dangled just out of reach against the wall. Lennister gathered himself on the weaving branch, swung the top of the tree gently,and then sprang. He caught the rope, slid down a foot or two, got a grip with both hands, and climbed to the top of the butte.

There he found a Triangle puncher who had secured the upper end of the rope to a stunted pine. He commandeered the man's horse and dashed across the table-land through the cattle just as a volley of shots cracked on the still morning air—a sinister welcome to the first gray shafts of daylight.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FINAL MOVE.

LENNISTER found Robbins and most of the Triangle men grouped on either side of the upper end of the slope, where they could sweep the ascent from the shelter of the bushes. Robbins quickly explained that the Bar Cross outfit had twice tried to rush the slope, and had been driven back with at least two wounded and one horse shot down in the fusillade poured from the top of the butte.

"Trope's with 'em," said Robbins excitedly. "They've run the Bar Cross cattle off east toward the bad lands of

the river. A man who said he came from Graham was here last night an' came up with a white handkerchief on a stick. Said Graham said we could move our cattle north without any fear of trouble. Then the Bar Cross crowd began to show up, an' I decided to stay pat."

Lennister had taken in the situation while Robbins was speaking. The Bar Cross herd was a blot on the plain in the northeast. Riders could be seen beyond the trees at the lower end of the slope. Trope was playing a trump card in his endeavor to get at the Triangle cattle, but Lennister was at a loss to understand his motive. He could not expect to run off the herd in broad day; it would hardly do him any good to get the Triangle herd on the south range if Graham had ordered otherwise. Trope's action could signify but one thing—a mad desire for revenge.

The sun had come up and the broad plain was like a sea of gold. The hostile riders disappeared in the shelter of the trees, and a perfect stillness settled down. This lasted for a little more than an hour, while Lennister pondered over Trope's latest move and the theft of the five thousand dollars from Connie Cameron. Trope had been in Ransford the afternoon and evening before, as Lennister had learned from the sheriff. It had been he who had made the complaint to Strang concerning the shooting of Claude Graham. The messenger who had accompanied Doctor French back to the Triangle had doubtless met Trope on the latter's return down the road from town, and had acquainted him with the girl's action in starting for town with the money. Lennister felt certain that Trope had had a hand in the theft. If so, he most likely had the money on him.

During the next hour or more Lennister tried to evolve a plan to get at Trope, but was unsuccessful. Then, suddenly, two riders dashed from the shelter of the trees across the lower end of the slope to the north side of the butte, where the brush shut them off from view.

"Tell the men not to fire at any one unless they start up the slope," Lennister instructed Robbins.

But this order was not necessary, for the expected assault did not materialize. Instead, a new and more formidable method of attack soon developed. One of the Triangle men cried out and pointed below the northeast corner of the butte. The others looked and saw a thin streamer floating like a veil in the air. A wisp of the veil floated over the butte, and then the Triangle men knew. It was smoke! Hardly had they realized this when another streamer drifted up from the southeast corner of the butte. The smoke grew rapidly in volume, and soon tongues of flame could be seen licking at the buck brush and grass at the sides of the slope. Then a sheet of fire seemed to rush across the lower end of the slope from either side, meet in the center, and come slowly upward as the wind freshened.

"They're going to burn us out!" shouted Robbins.

In a flash Lennister had seen through Trope's design. He would attack under cover of the fire, in the confusion of smoke and flame. The grass was long and dry, and the bushes on the sides of the slope were dry as tinder. Already the fire was racing up each side. The grass was burning fast, and the light wind threw volumes of smoke across the top of the butte.

"Take your coats, saddle blankets, anything, an' kill that grass fire when it gets up here!' he yelled. "Don't mind the brush. *Kill that grass fire!*"

Behind them the cattle were sniffing the air and shaking their heads. Soon they were milling, and one steer dashed past and down the slope through the fire, bellowing madly. In an incredibly short space of time the fire had swept

up the slope. The Triangle men fought to put it out with coats and hats and a few saddle blankets hastily gathered. The smoke rolled in upon them, choking them, and the sun was a red ball through the murky screen shot with the fiery tongues of flame.

The pound of hoofs came from below the smoke screen.

"Let 'em have it!" shouted Lennister above the din.

Guns blazed and bullets cut through the screen toward dark forms. Then there were horses—rearing and plunging in the smoke. Men leaped and ran and were singed in getting through the sheet of fire which swept on across the big table-land. Then they sent a volley into the riders who were trying to control their horses. Some went down, others turned back. The raiders returned the fire, and several Triangle men dropped.

Trope's voice could be heard roaring somewhere ahead of the flames, and Lennister ran across the hot ground toward the spot. Smoke and flying embers now swept in from the brush at the upper corners of the slope. The smoke became so dense that it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe, except at close quarters. Then came the thunder of hundreds of hoofs, and a cry went up.

"The cattle!"

Horsemen dashed back down the slope, and Triangle men afoot ran to drag those on the ground out of the path of the herd that was making for the only means of leaving the burning table-land. The fire had reached the pond, had burned faster on the north side, where the trees were sparse, and was driving the maddened steers around to the south of the pond from where they started in a wild stampede for the slope.

Lennister caught a horse which proved to be the one he had ridden across the table-land, and was soon in the saddle. Others of the Triangle outfit ran for the trees, where many of the horses had sought shelter, and in a space of moments half the men were mounted.

As they rode back toward the head of the slope, they were caught between two sections of the stampeding herd. Cattle were plunging down the slope below them, and cattle were thundering down upon them from above. Lennister motioned to the men to ride down the slope. His gun was in his hand, and he was on the lookout for one member of the Bar Cross crew—Trope! Where was Trope?

The Triangle riders followed him down. At the lower end of the slope the cattle plunged into the trees, around both sides of the butte, ahead on the plain. Shots came from the right, and Lennister spurred his horse in that direction. He caught a glimpse of two riders coming toward the trees, and recognized Connie Cameron and Graham. The Bar Cross owner was waving his hand and shouting. Then Lennister saw a horseman dart from the shelter of the trees. Graham's shout came to Lennister on the wind.

"Stop it——"

The horseman's hand went up, there was a sharp report, and Graham slumped in the saddle. Lennister recognized the man who had fired the shot. It was Trope—gone mad with rage, his eyes wild, his big gun sweeping in circles over his head as he plunged back into the trees with Lennister after him.

But Trope's action was a ruse, for as soon as Lennister had entered the timber, he rode out once more, and this time he headed north toward the butte. Lennister saw him pass in the open and changed his course, emerging from the trees as a number of horsemen came galloping around the west side of the butte. It needed no second glance to recognize the sheriff's posse. They came full tilt, and Trope doubled back.

Connie Cameron was now directly in his path. She had dismounted and was

standing over Graham, who was sitting on the ground. Lennister cut across, and his heart swelled into his throat as he saw the girl bring out her father's gun. He drove in his steel, urging his horse to its last powers of speed in a mighty spurt.

Trope saw him coming, swung his gun over his left arm, and fired. The bullet whistled past Lennister as another shot broke upon the air. Lennister saw a curl of smoke from the gun in the girl's hand, and Trope's horse reared, sending his rider's second shot into the air above. The horse came down upon its knees, throwing Trope over its head. The man got to his feet as Lennister landed near him after a flying leap from the saddle.

"Drop that gun, Trope!!" cried Lennister. *"You're through!"*

Trope's eyes were two points of darting fire, but he slipped his gun into its holster. Lennister could hear the sheriff and his men bearing down upon them. He put up his own weapon to wait.

As he did so, Trope's right hand moved like lightning. A loud report shattered the momentary stillness. Two thin smoke spirals curled upward from the hips of Trope and Lennister. Then Trope's gun drooped and fell from his grasp. He stood for a moment with a surprised expression on his distorted face, and then he sank to the ground.

From behind him, Lennister heard Connie Cameron's low cry. Then the sheriff and his men were about them.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NEW ORDER.

FRANK GRAHAM stared at the circle of faces about him with a dazed look. He smiled faintly at Connie Cameron, who held out a drink of water. He drank slowly, with his hand on the emergency bandage about his chest. Then he scowled at Sheriff Strang and spoke unsteadily.

"I—sent word—to Trope—to lay off," he said. "He took matters—in—his own hands. It made him mad—I guess. He wanted his—own way. I—had Lennister—pegged wrong. It's—all a big mistake—sheriff. My fault——" His words died away, and the sheriff told him not to try to talk any more.

"We've sent a man to the ranch for a spring wagon, but I guess one of my men can take you on a horse," said Strang. "I can't see that you're hit fatal, Graham; just keep a stiff upper lip."

They got the wounded ranch owner on a horse with one of the deputies and started him for the Bar Cross, accompanied by two other riders, in case they should be needed.

The Triangle men and some of the posse were herding a number of Bar Cross men who had surrendered in the confusion after the loss of their leader. Connie Cameron stood at Lennister's side, her hand upon his arm. Sheriff Strang stared at them with a frown.

"Did you help Lennister break jail?" he asked the girl abruptly.

"I loaned him a gun, sheriff," replied Connie with a smile.

"Without knowing what he was going to do with it, I suppose," said Strang sarcastically.

"You as much as said I could bail him out," said the girl sweetly.

"But not with a gun," snapped Strang, looking from one to the other.

"Listen, sheriff; I reckon we three better talk this thing over alone," said Lennister, with a glance at the others about them. "It's—sort of private."

The sheriff hesitated, then waved the others away.

"Now tell him about the money," said Lennister to Connie, as he drew tobacco and papers from his shirt pocket.

Strang listened with widening eyes as the girl explained about the money she had taken from the safe, and how she had been robbed of it.

"With the money gone and the cattle in danger, and the time so short, I had nothing else to do but get Lennister out, sheriff," she finished. "I'm—glad I did it." She held her head high and looked at him defiantly.

"You should have come direct to me," said Strang, without looking at her. "Do you think you can pick that messenger out of the Bar Cross bunch we've got here—that is, if he's with the crowd?"

"I'm sure of it," replied the girl.

The trio walked to where the prisoners were being held. Both Connie and Lennister recognized the messenger at the same time.

"Who got the money?" asked the sheriff sternly, without any preliminaries.

The man scowled darkly and remained silent.

"Who got the money?" Strang repeated in a louder voice.

Then, when the man refused to talk, he turned to a deputy. "Search him, then handcuff him, and we'll take him in. There are more counts than one we can hold *him* on."

"Trope got it!" the man blurted as he caught the glint of the light on the steel in the deputy's hands.

"You rode ahead and met him coming out from town?" asked the sheriff.

The man nodded as the deputy put the handcuffs back in his pocket.

The sheriff motioned to Lennister and the girl to follow him. He left them at a little distance while he examined the person of Trope, lying on the ground where he had fallen. When he returned, he placed the packet of bills in Connie's hands. Then he turned to Lennister.

"About the best thing you can do now is take Miss Cameron home," he said. "But I warn you not to leave the Triangle until you have my permission."

Days passed and summer came to the Blue Dome country. Will Cameron so far recovered his strength that he could sit out on the porch. The Triangle beef herd grazed peacefully on the luscious grass between the river and Rattle Butte. Claude Graham rode up one day, looking a little pale, and brought the news that his father was long since out of danger. He told Connie how he had issued an ultimatum to his father and had threatened to leave the ranch for good if he didn't order Trope to release the cattle and stay on the Bar Cross.

"Your father told me that the morning I rode down there to see him," Connie said to the youth with a smile. "And the sheriff told us how you both had told him all. It was square of you, Claude." She held out her hand, and he took it gladly.

Will Cameron sent back a written request that Graham join the Teton Stockmen's Association, and explained that the location of the Bar Cross so far south of the Blue Dome Range had caused the association to overlook him. Graham sent back a cordial note of acceptance. Then Connie and Lennister visited the Bar Cross, and Graham offered Lennister the place of manager of his ranch.

"I'll think it over," Lennister told him.

They rode back with the sunset flaming over the western peaks.

"Might be a good job," Lennister told the girl.

"Possibly," said Connie, her eyes sparkling. "But you're acting as foreman of the Triangle, you know, and, besides, you can't leave until the sheriff gives you permission to go."

"Shucks, the sheriff's got all over bein' peeved," said Lennister. "He knows all about everything. He'll tell me I can go any time, now."

"Will he?" said Connie with a superior air. "You just ask him. I happen to know he won't give his permission."

Lennister looked at her in surprise. "I could go anyway," he reflected. "But

what makes you think he'd tell me I couldn't go, Connie?"

"I told him *not* to," said Connie softly, looking straight ahead.

Lennister caught her horse by the bridle and brought it to a stop. Then he looked at her, and it might have been the glow of the sunset that put the roses in her cheeks.

"You want me to stay, Connie?" he asked slowly.

"I want you to stay, Lennister," she responded.

"Gun—reputation—an' all, without knowing any more about me?" he asked wonderingly.

"I know more about you than you think," she answered in a low voice. "I know—— Oh, Lennister! Blue Dome and the Triangle is as good a place for you to stay as any—don't you think?"

Lennister's hand touched hers on her knee. "I wonder," he said in a low voice. Then, as her fingers closed about his: "I reckon I'll stay, Connie."

Their silence spoke in its own way as they rode slowly back to the Triangle.

FIVE THOUSAND GEESE REACH SANCTUARY

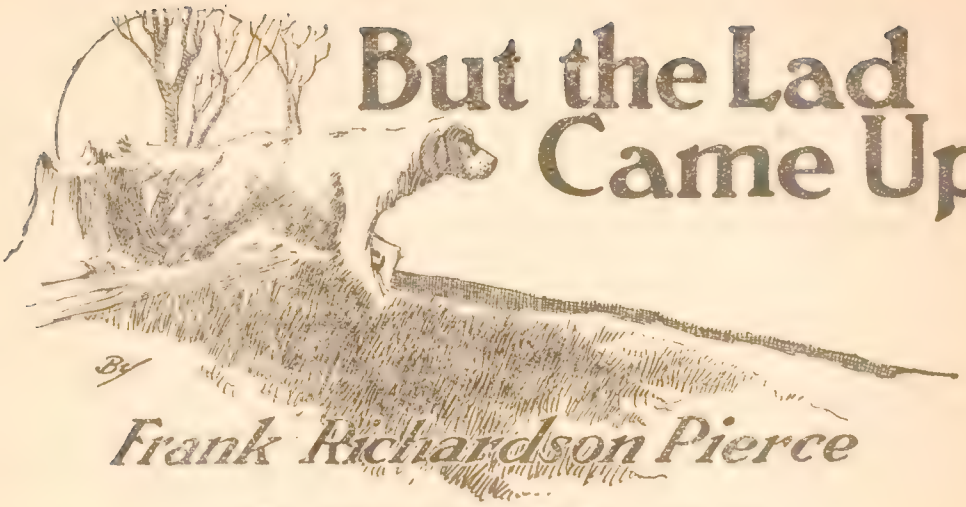
A FLOCK of five thousand wild geese arrived a few weeks ago at Jack Miner's bird sanctuary at Kingsville, Ontario, several of them bearing his tags on their legs, thus giving him positive proof that they are the same birds which visit him every year.

When the birds arrived from the south, they were flying at least a half mile high, but soon found their way down to the Miner sanctuary. Miner says that the whole secret of his success in taming these wild birds is to throw a handful of corn instead of a thimbleful of shot. When they are off the Miner sanctuary, one cannot get within gunshot of them, as they soon get to know their friends from their enemies. They always arrive at his place at about the same date each year. The facts he is gradually gathering together regarding their migration is growing continually. Every time a bird is caught and tagged, complete data are placed on file as to when the tag was put on, how many times the bird returns to the sanctuary, and other facts of the creature's history.

RAILROAD TO CLOSE GAP IN MEXICO

ACCORDING to plans of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, the one-hundred-mile gap in its lines between Tepic, in the State of Nayarit, and Laquemada, in the State of Jalisco, will be closed by the construction of a new road by April, 1926. This will permit travelers to make the through trip from Vancouver, via San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Mexican Pacific ports to Mexico City.

The railroad company is using thirty-two million *pesos* paid to it by the Mexican government for revolutionary damages as part of the cost of construction, under an agreement made by former President Obregon. The stretch is said to be one of the most difficult in the world for railroad building. Seventeen miles have cost three million dollars a mile. Seventeen tunnels have already been built.



But the Lad Came Up

By

Frank Richardson Pierce

Author of "All-around Austin Buys a Dog," etc.

DURING his very brief span of life the pup had quickly learned that his mission was to love mankind and to serve. Having experienced none of life's tragedies, he looked upon the world with playful eyes filled to their soft depths with trust. About his little world were many kennels filled with pups like himself and older dogs. Men sometimes came, fondled the pups, money changed hands, and the pups disappeared.

Thus it was that when, on a day, a man entered his cage, he romped toward him and in a hundred little ways indicated that he was trustful and that all was well. The man half turned away and swore. He hated the task before him.

"Hang it," he muttered. "I'd rather be shot, but orders are orders, and must be obeyed. It'll all be over in a few seconds, and you'll never know. Confound it, quit looking at me with such trustful eyes. I'm your worst enemy at this moment! You see, sport, it's like this. Your mother is one of the finest setters and fields dogs in the country, but your father, although he is a licensed dog, doesn't begin to compare with her. They say you look like your mother, but your sire's blood in your veins will tell. Quit wiggling around."

He dropped the pup into a sack and headed for the river, walking rapidly in order that the disagreeable task might be over with. After a few squirms of protest the pup quieted down. Such was his trust in mankind that he sensed that this was a game in which all pups indulged sooner or later, and he awaited developments, though at times his heart pounded with apprehension. There was a rock in the other end of the sack—a rock that weighed considerably more than the pup.

The river ran swiftly, its waters dark and mysterious where the pools eddied deeply, as if harboring many a secret tragedy of life.

In contrast to the black flood rushing to the sea, the air was clear and the sun was shining softly on the land. Leaves stirred lazily in a gentle breeze. It was a day for life, apparently; tragedy should have no part in the scheme of things, and yet—— The man swore softly again as he neared the bank and muttered something about orders and a poor little dog.

The caretaker's cottage of the Queen City Gun Club was located on a slight elevation above a small lake stocked with bass and trout. The rolling hills, except for the occasional clumps of timber, were covered with ripening grain. Old Dennis Crosby had looked after the gun club grounds and trained its members' dogs for nearly two generations; then he died.

Several big-hearted sportsmen took his grief-stricken son in hand and with reluctance acquainted him with his resources—a healthy young body, a love for dogs, and Old Dennis Crosby's grit. "And, lad," Davis Long, president of the club concluded, "you can make your home right here in the caretaker's cottage as before. There'll always be plenty of fuel for the stove, and we'll find enough odd jobs to satisfy that appetite of yours.

"Yes sir! And thank you!"

"And is there any particular ambition you are harboring in your young heart?" Long's smile was encouraging. He knew young men, and it was a poor lad indeed who did not secretly long to be a policeman, sailor, cowboy, or aviator. Long correctly read the signs now. "Out with it, son!" he urged. "And if it's anything I can do to help it along, you can count on me!"

"It's a lot to ask, sir, but I'd like to continue where dad left off, training the club's dogs for the field. I know I can do it, and the money will put me through college."

The silence that followed was eloquent, and it was the lad who spoke first. "I understand, Mr. Long, and it's all right. I've heard dad say too many times that a man will trust others to do most anything but break his dog. That's something for himself or an expert. I know what I can do. I know I can do it, but the members don't!"

He rather fancied that he knew who would train the gun club dogs in the future. There was Bixley, his father's old enemy. Dennis Crosby's dogs had beaten dogs trained by Bixley on more than one occasion. There was something about the Bixley trained dogs suggesting the use of the whip. Bixley had approached members before old Dennis was buried. He would be more active than ever now. Against him an untried youth would have no chance.

As many a youth has been forced to do, Jack Crosby took stock in the dark hours of night. His father, in his eyes, had been the greatest trainer of dogs, the best father and pal in the world. He had been more, he had been mother also.

"And now he's gone," he muttered. "He always said when he died he would watch over me. I wonder——"

Greater minds than Jack's have pondered on the subject and wondered. Toward morning he slept, but his course was mapped out. It would take time, hard work, and a denial of all pleasures that cost money.

The camping trip into the mountains was the first to be called off. He could spare neither the time nor the money now. The old suit of clothes would have to do another year. During the following week he called on various members of the club with a view to training dogs. Refusal was invariably gentle, and because he understood, it was the boy who made refusal easy. A week later he wrote a letter. It was brief and businesslike, with a trace of youth running through the lines:

DIXON KENNELS: You advertise Lady May's pups at one hundred dollars each. I am sending ten dollars. Please save me one of the next lot, and three months from date I'll send the rest. Yours truly,

JACK CROSBY.

Ben Dixon read the letter and almost shed tears. "Brave lad that Jack! And I know his little game, and I'm for him. Still, for his own good, I shouldn't make it too easy. Here goes!" He wrote:

DEAR JACK: I am holding one of Lady May's setter pups for you. I want fifty dollars down and the remainder whenever it is convenient for you, for I know you are good. This will enable you to receive the pup sooner. How about it? Respectfully yours,

BEN DIXON.

A month later Dixon placed one of Lady May's pups in a crate and nailed it shut. "Of all the pups I've sent forth this year, Mike, you're the luckiest, for you are going to a lad who won't spoil you because he's old Dennis Crosby's son."

The hours that followed were full of endless surprises for Mike. He missed his mother and her frequent groomings, but other things kept him interested; the ride to the station, the express office, the baggage car, a long ride, and finally another express office, and Pete Chapman.

Chapman drove an express truck that a large family might be fed and clothed.

"Hello pup!" he said cheerfully as Mike licked his hand. "Let's see; you're going to Mr. Jack Crosby at the gun club. That means some wealthy man has bought you, and that the best in the land is yours. Come on, you must be tired of that crate!"

He lifted the crate to the truck, climbed to the seat, and whistled cheerfully as he drove into the country. The road was rough in spots, and when he struck the bridge across the gun club creek, the crate bounced so heavily that he glanced back.

"Great guns!" he gasped, and slammed on the brake with such force that the wheels skidded. "That pup's gone!"

A loose slat on the crate told the story.

Somewhat nervously he read the lettering on a card tacked to the crate: "Value: One hundred dollars."

"A hundred bucks! Wow! And I'm responsible. It don't seem possible that any man could have such a lot of hard luck on such a fine day."

He was still growling as he backed the truck around and retraced his course. His thoughts took a domestic trend.

"That means the missus don't get that hat she's wanted, and Heaven knows she's wanted it long enough. Also, I don't get that overcoat for winter, and the kids will lose out on some things they wanted. A hundred dollars is a lot of money."

He stopped frequently and whistled, but there was no response, and from time to time he glanced at the crate as if expecting by some magic the pup would materialize.

The river loomed up to the right, and a man was hurrying toward the bank with a sack in his hand.

"Hey there!" he shouted.

The man stopped, and Pete Chapman climbed down, vaulted a fence, and hurried across a field.

"Haven't seen a hundred dollars' worth of pup around here, have you?"

"Nope!"

"I lost one, and I'm out just a hundred smacks, and that ain't half of the story!" He eyed the sack speculatively. "What you got in that sack?"

"A pup!"

"A pup! What kind of a pup? Let's see him!" Chapman thought he saw the drowning man's straw.

The sack was opened and a setter pup squirmed forth. "H'm! I can't see any difference—mostly white, black in places, soft ears, and nice disposition. How much is he worth?"

"Nothing. Had orders to put him in this sack and heave it into the river. Old Man Holman is mighty careful about any of his stock living that isn't pure. The rest of the litter died."

Pete Chapman had an idea. "All right, take the sack," he said pointedly, "and throw it in the river. Glad I met you."

He tucked the pup under his arm and sauntered away. He was happy, and

he informed the world of his state of mind by whistling. He dropped the pup into the empty crate, carefully nailed it shut, then placed it on the seat beside him.

"Can't take any chances," he explained. "You're in luck and so am I. Wonder where the other pup went to? Well, you're going to a rich man, and he can do the worrying if any's done!"

As Chapman stopped before the gun club house a young man bounded down the steps. "Got him?" he queried excitedly.

"I'm looking for Mr. Jack Crosby," Chapman announced.

"I'm Jack Crosby!"

"You are? Why I halfway expected to find a middle-aged man." Pete Chapman experienced a sharp twinge of conscience. "You really bought this pup?"

"I'm buying him with my own money. He's one of Lady May's pups, and he's worth a hundred dollars. He's going to be worth more than that to me before I'm done." As he dropped excited comments, the lad was tearing the slats from the crate. An instant later the pup was in his arms.

Pete Chapman squirmed uneasily. It was unfair, downright fraud. He squared his shoulders, but just then his resolution left him. "A hundred dollars is a lot of money; the boy shouldn't ——" No, that was the wrong attitude. If a boy was foolish enough to spend that much, particularly a poor boy, it was his business. He started to speak. "A pup's a pup!" he inwardly decided. "Here, son," he said, and his voice was gruff, "sign this!"

Pete Chapman closed his receipt book and drove his truck back to town a little faster than the law allowed. He did not glance back; he did not want to, because his conscience hurt enough as it was.

That night he summoned sufficient courage to visit Bixley. "Who's Lady May?" he asked.

The trainer was almost shocked. "Lady May? One of the best field dogs in the country. Her pups are sent the length and breadth of America. Why?"

"Oh nothing, I just wondered. Isn't a pup a pup? Can't any pup be trained to put up birds?"

Bixley's attitude was one of condescending contempt. "My dear sir, it's in the breeding. Blood tells. I kill off my runts and keep the best; the mongrels are drowned, also."

"Thanks," Chapman replied. "I'm just curious! Got interested to-day when I delivered a pup to Jack Crosby. Some rich man's son, isn't he?" His query contained a hopeful note.

Bixley's eyes lighted strangely. "A pup to Jack Crosby, eh? One of Lady May's?"

"Yeah. Who is Jack Crosby?" Chapman repeated.

"Orphan kid, rather fresh and more confidence than any kid should have."

Pete Chapman nodded, and spent a sleepless night. "Still," he mused well after midnight, "a pup is a pup." But he found scant comfort in his words, for the fact remained that he had defrauded a boy.

From the first, in the intelligent little setter Jack Crosby found something on which to lavish affection—the one close thing to him, in fact. In the same animated bundle was his hope of the future—to bring wealthy sportsmen to his door, as they had come to his father's door. He had planned carefully, but the test of his financial sacrifice, the weighing of confidence in self by others, was far in the future.

A strange tightening of his throat cords came when he looked at the empty kennels. As long as his father had lived, the kennels were crowded with blooded dogs awaiting the training of a master hand. The silence, the emptiness reminded him of the unfilled place in his heart. He selected one for Mike's

home and returned to the club house. That night and for several nights thereafter Mike howled his isolation to the world.

There was much of old Dennis in Jack's method of training. His patience was amazing, for he had early learned that a man who cannot master himself cannot master a dog, and thus as he trained the dog he trained himself.

Old Dennis' choke collar was about Mike's neck, and the check cord in his son's hand. Jack carried his father's whip—the whip that had never laid across a dog's back, except ever so lightly. The "force system" it was called, but there was little force connected with it. Mike felt discipline in the hand of love, and he obeyed not because he always felt like it, but because he knew no other course. The lessons were short and interesting, and the more difficulty the young dog experienced in mastering them, the more patient the boy became. The boy found his reward in steady improvement, and the dog's reward was whole-hearted praise. And the difficult lessons, when mastered, were the longest retained, until the great day came when they roamed afield and the dog's keen nose picked up the scent of game birds.

"Good boy!" cried Jack, as Mike obeyed implicitly the command to charge, hie on, heel, hold, and to stop dead. The boy fought back the temptation to hunt just yet. And Mike, himself, was no more eager than his master to meet the great test of all.

The peace of their great day was abruptly broken by the crack of a whip, a sudden whimpering of a dog and the harsh words of an angry man.

"That's not for you to see, Mike," the boy said with sudden decision.

He tied the dog to a tree and broke through a clump of timber along which a man and dog had been working.

"Aw, don't hit him, mister; you can't teach him that way!" he shouted.

The other turned, and Jack met Bixley's dark eyes. "Mind your own business. This is my dog!"

"If it was anybody else's, he'd be a fool to leave him with you," the youth retorted hotly. He was no match for the man, but his fighting spirit was aroused. "And, besides, you're on gun club grounds without permission. You're not a member!"

Bixley's dog, a beautiful setter, made a sudden bolt for freedom and succeeded. "I'll take care of your case later," the man threatened, and he hurried to overtake the trailing end of the check line.

"Father's enemy, and now he's mine!" the youth reflected. "Still, dad once said no one need fear a man who would mistreat a dog—it was a sure indication of yellow in his make-up. Mike and I should worry!"

Bixley had only contempt for the youth's training method, until from the seclusion of some brush he watched Mike perform one day.

"An impudent kid," he mused. "And the pup is not trained to gun fire yet."

This sudden thought suggested possibilities, and for several days thereafter the man waited his chance. His desire for revenge was eventually rewarded. Mike had acquitted himself with credit and was free of restraint. The man scent caught his nostrils, and he paused. An instant later the heavens seemed split with thunder. The shock crashed against his delicate ear drums and momentarily stunned his very nerve centers. For the first time fear swept through his high-strung body. He no longer controlled his movements; something more powerful than his master's steadying voice, governed him now. His tail flashed between his legs in an effort to make himself small and compact from this unknown thing; then he fled, nor did he stop until he reached his kennel!

Jack Crosby's eyes flashed, and a dull

red tinged his face as he leaped through the brush. Bixley stood there, smoking shotgun in his hand.

"Blue grouse!" exclaimed Bixley.

"You lie," the youth panted. "It was a dirty trick to make my dog gun shy. Well, you succeeded; the finest in the world can seldom stand a shotgun fired unexpectedly over them. You even kneeled," and he pointed to the crushed grass, "to bring the report closer."

Bixley laughed and turned away.

The thoroughbred of a few moments before was a trembling mongrel when the lad reached the kennel.

"Mike," he whispered, "it's all right! It's all right! Did it break your eardrums?"

Almost fearfully he whistled in a low tone. The dog cocked his head and lifted his ears with interest.

"He didn't hurt you, boy, and this other thing, this noise, we'll beat that. We've beaten everything up to now. We'll beat that, too."

The fields trials were near, and already the club house was filling with sportsmen and the kennels housed dogs trained to the minute. A row of silver cups stood on the mantle over the log fireplace. It was fall, and crispness was in the air. Jack had withdrawn to the caretaker's house, and Mike was in a kennel near by. In ones and twos they drifted around and looked at the dog. It was Dixon, genial and a true sportsman, who gave Mike a brief glance and tapped Jack on the arm.

"Where's Lady May's Mike?" he queried.

"There!" the youth answered. "A great dog!"

A strange expression flashed over Dixon's face. He stepped closer, and his breath came sharply. A setter might be a setter, and a pup a pup, but this dog had never been mothered by Lady May. He returned to the club house and opened an album to a photograph of the pup he had shipped. Bixley stepped up behind, and his eyes took in minute details. A quick intake of the breath was his only emotion. Then he left the building and drove rapidly away in his car.

"That stray pup that came to me so long ago was a Lady May setter; but what was it Pete Chapman delivered to the Crosby kid?"

A half hour later he forced a confession from Chapmna. "Lost the pup, eh, and substituted a pup from the Holman kennels?" Chapman assented. "Well, keep your mouth shut and I won't get you into trouble. I'm out to beat young Crosby's dog, and with what I know, I can bar him from competition. This affair is for thoroughbreds. Now don't get scared. I'll keep your name out of it."

Pete Chapman reflected for a half hour after Bixley departed; then he went out and cashed a check for one hundred dollars. Rather grimly he set forth for the club house. It is difficult for a grown man to confess wrongdoing, to a lad, but Pete Chapman went through with it. Then he handed the youth one hundred dollars and turned away.

Pete Chapman had freed his shoulders of a burden, and Jack Crosby now felt its crushing weight. Out in the darkness he struggled to control his emotions—and lost. Temptation came. The trial was for thoroughbreds; no one would know the difference, and it meant so much.

"Dad!" he whispered. "Mike isn't a Lady May dog at all. What'll I do? What'd you do?" And the answer came silently.

Jack Crosby went directly to the president's office. Bixley emerged as he arrived. Long smiled encouragingly, for he read signs of a struggle on the youthful face. He was silent for a full minute.

"I'm withdrawing Mike!" he man-

aged to say. "He's not a thoroughbred. I just found it out!"

David Long extended his hand, man-to-man fashion. Through his window he had seen a lad with his arms about a dog, sobbing. He had wondered. Then, after Bixley had protested Mike, he had understood.

"Mr. Crosby," he said, "I know what this cost you! You won a greater victory to-night over yourself than your dog could possibly win to-morrow. Your withdrawal is denied."

"He's not a thoroughbred, Mr. Long."

"Your withdrawal is refused. Your reason is insufficient!"

"But the rules!"

"Ah, yes, the rules. For a moment, Jack, I had forgotten the rules. Run along!"

Long paced the floor of his office; then he called in a number of his fellows. "Is to-morrow's event a sporting proposition or not?"

"Sporting first, last, and all the time. Why?" demanded one.

"Then second my amendment to the rules and don't ask me too many questions."

Long put the amendment, then silenced their argument with a wave of his hand. Then he told them a story.

"And," he concluded, "not for sentimental reasons, but for good, sound training reasons, don't you fellows go off half cocked. And," he added significantly, "don't make up your mind about a trainer until after the trials."

"You mean Jack Crosby——"

"You fellows get out of here; I'm busy."

A crisp morning, rolling fields of stubble, eager dogs, nervous masters, critical judges, and an enthusiastic gallery! Jack Crosby and Mike found themselves in the same lane with Bixley and his dog. Bob.

"Blood tells!" exclaimed Bixley, apparently for the benefit of the gallery, but really for the boy's hearing. A murmur of surprise swept through the throng when Long handed shotguns to Bixley and Jack. "Shooting at field trials, it's never been done here before," every one murmured.

"We changed certain rules," the president explained. "Bixley was affected by the rules, claiming that this was more than a contest for a prize, but a contest for the training of dogs. He demanded that the dogs be fired over and birds retrieved during the last field we cross."

Style, speed, range!

Both dogs had it. It was a pretty sight to watch them moving at top speed from different angles toward the same covey of birds.

"Hold, Mike! Back, boy. Bob's birds!"

Mike obeyed, though he trembled with eagerness. Bixley's dog put them up a moment later.

"Hie on!"

Again Mike was off. His style was perfect as he came to a point. Tail rigid, noise pointing faultlessly, one paw lifted. For a moment he held—then the bushes rustled and a startled calf galloped away. The gallery laughed; Bixley was triumphant. Jack Crosby alone had faith. Just for a moment he hesitated. "Put 'em up, Mike!" he cried.

A covey of birds roared away.

"Hie on!"

Mike was off once more, ranging far and wide. Bixley's dog swung toward him, closer and closer. Mike came to a point.

"Hold, Bob, back! Back!"

Bixley hurried forward. The dog glanced back at his master, and just for a moment he seemed to crouch. Eyes that were on Mike shifted for a moment, then returned.

"Put 'em up!"

Mike leaped forward to the roar of wings.

"He's got it on you, Bixley," a man said frankly. "You're a shade slow on obedience."

"Yes, but wait until we start shooting. You won't see Crosby's Mike for dust."

"Gun shy?"

"The kid's been working on him for weeks. No luck!"

"Too bad!"

"He's not a thoroughbred. Blood tells, you know!"

Mike vaulted the fence into the last field. Bixley swung his dog in closer. He wanted to be near when the shooting commenced.

The boy called his dog back. "Easy, boy," he whispered. "We've got time."

"What's the matter, son, afraid?" Bixley queried.

Long was close, and he heard the remark. "Bixley," he snapped out, "pay attention to business. Your dog is pointing."

Bixley turned sharply. He had failed to see the setter trembling with eagerness at the rustlings of the birds. He had stood it to the breaking point, and he broke. The birds soared from the covey.

The field moved forward, Jack keeping Mike close to him. Again Bixley's Bob came to a point. This time the man was watching. He hurried forward, the dog half crouched as if fearing punishment for disobedience.

"Put 'em up, Bob!"

The gun cracked and a bird dropped from the flock. Bob searched the stubble while Bixley's eyes turned toward a boy and a dog some distance off. The dog had held despite the gun fire.

"It's all right, Mike," the boy whispered. "That's the way we do it! Now hie on!"

Mike swung away, and two minutes later the supreme test was at hand. The lad was almost white in his tenseness as the dog came to a point.

"Poor kid!" muttered Long. "It's a crime to see a magnificent dog humiliated."

To those watching, it seemed an age as the boy struggled for his courage. To Jack Crosby it seemed an eternity. "What's the matter with the kid," a judge growled. "I'm afraid that dog will do like Bixley's and break."

"Steady, boy!" Jack's voice sounded strange to himself. "Steady—Mike, put 'em up!"

The roar of wings and the roar of the gun mingled, and through it all came the steadying words of the lad. Where time had dragged in cycles of eternities, now it moved madly. A struggle went on within, in which blood told, and from it merged the setter, his soft eyes shining with pride as he approached with the fallen bird.

Long's expensive shotgun clattered to the stubble.

"Mike, Mike!" the boy cried as tears ran down his cheek. "You did it! You did it! We fought through everything and won!"

"What you shedding tears over, Long?" growled Dixon, mopping his eyes before the gallery noticed it.

"Because real drama gets under my hide, and I'm proud of it. You're not dry-eyed yourself, you highbinder. That kid tried everything he knew to cure that dog of gun shyness. Then he found one of his old dad's letters. Old Dennis had once cured a dog by holding him back and letting him watch them shoot over other dogs. We tried it yesterday for the first time. Mike bolted, then stopped and watched what happened when he saw that the other dog wasn't afraid. That's why the kid let Bixley shoot first. He outfoxed him."

Dixon dried his eyes and stalked across the field. "That's one of Lady May's dogs you've got there, Bixley. Where'd you get him? Never mind the answer. I can find out! I've refused for years to sell you a dog from

my kennel. Twice to-day that dog of yours cringed. Bob's a high-strung setter, and rough treatment shows in his actions. You're through! Through as far as I'm concerned."

"And so far as the club is concerned, Bixley," added Long. "Bob goes to his real owner, Jack Crosby. Jack will make a real field dog out of him."

"It's great to kick a man when he's down!" retorted Bixley unpleasantly.

"Or a lad," said Long pointedly, "but the lad came up despite it. It was not your failure to win that prompts our action, but the methods you used. And by the way, that reminds me, I haven't congratulated the winner." And Long pushed his way through a group surrounding a dog and boy.

"Blood told," he said thoughtfully. "The dominating strain came to the surface in Jack, in Mike, and—Bixley."

PROFITABLE INDIAN FISHERIES

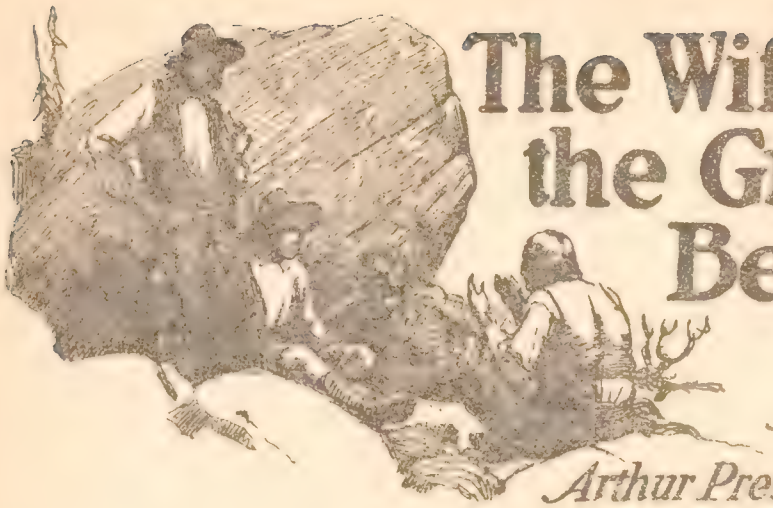
VARIOUS tribes of Indians living in the Northwest reap an annual harvest from fishing sufficient to make many of them self-supporting. The largest income from fishing earned by an individual Indian is reported at $4,242 per year by several Indians on the Quinaielt reservation in the State of Washington. Incomes of other Indians range from one thousand to thirty-five hundred dollars annually.

Indians of the Neah Bay jurisdiction at the most northwesterly point of the State of Washington, obtain large receipts from seal as well as from salmon fishing. Although handicapped by their ancient methods of seal fishing, these Indians have an annual sale of seal furs amounting to twelve thousand dollars and upward for the raw skins. Their receipts from salmon also exceed ten thousand dollars annually. Fishing on the Quinaielt River on the Quinaielt reservation also brings receipts to the Indians of approximately fifty-three thousand dollars annually. This river is only about twenty miles in length from its mouth to Quinaielt Lake. Salmon born in Quinaielt Lake and the smaller streams emptying into it, after having spent from three to five years in the ocean, return in large numbers through the river to Quinaielt Lake to spawn.

During the time of the spring "salmon run," the Indians are busy rushing on some eighty "locations" along the shores of this river, extending from the mouth to about two miles upstream.

THE BUTCHER WOLF

AMONG the many wicked and knowing old wolves who have made trouble for ranchers and cattlemen, terrorizing whole districts by their depredations, one of the most notable was the marauder known as The Butcher Wolf who took toll of the herds of Eagle County, California, a few years ago. The Butcher acquired his name from his habit of killing or mutilating animals far in excess of his own capacity to eat. It was his custom to bite off the ears or tails of calves and steers and otherwise leave his mark on them. Finally a government hunter was put on The Butcher's trail, with orders to stick to it until he got his wolf. He rode over the marauder's whole domain, studying his paths and habits and laying the most cunning traps that human ingenuity could devise. The result was that The Butcher fell a victim to the hunter's trap and the great wolf's head now adorns the office wall of the State Board of Stock Inspection Commissioners, in Denver.



The Wife of the Grizzly Bear

By
Arthur Preston Hankins
Author of "Secret of Tumblebug Ranch," etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SMOKE.

KIRBY had heard that Tungapulla was a hundred years old. In fact, if he remembered correctly, the old soothsayer had himself claimed that age when Star first met him at the railroad camp of Haskins & Lee. He didn't believe it, however. He doubted if Tungapulla knew his correct age. But he undoubtedly was very old—so old that Star had often wondered at his seemingly tireless muscles, his good vision, and his ability to dispense with sleep. But Tungapulla was an Indian; and Star remembered having read, only a short time before, of an Indian over eighty years of age who every year danced from eight thirty in the evening until dawn in some religious ceremony.

To-night was not the first time since they had entered the Valley of the Monkeys that Star had found Tungapulla missing from his blankets. He often roamed about in the middle of the night on some secret business of his own, which had caused Star to wonder. Tungapulla was enigmatical, however. The longer Star knew him the less he was able to understand him. This old character was a mystery, and would remain a mystery, perhaps, until the end of his days.

So Star was not greatly surprised to find him missing when the peculiar rumbling sounds had awakened him from sleep. He called to the girl.

"Tungapulla isn't in his blankets!" was his announcement. "I wonder what he's up to now."

Fiquanda Tabango joined him, having hastily slipped into the man's shirt that she wore, and her riding skirt. Her feet were bare; her long black hair was hanging to below her waist.

"He's a night hawk," she said laughingly, seemingly not greatly disturbed by the strange sounds that she had heard. "For years—ever since I have known him—he has left his bed to wander, nobody knows where. I guess he goes out to commune with the loon and the coyote. I don't think that he had anything to do with those sounds."

"Perhaps not," Star agreed. "Just the same, I wish he were here to tell us what he thinks of them. He knows more about the mysteries of this weird sink than we do."

"He'll be here in the morning, no doubt. Then we can ask him if he

heard. And—listen, Star! I hear the horses or the burros plunging around in their hobbles, trying to run. The sounds have scared them. You'd better go and see if you can quiet them, or we'll have a search on our hands the first thing in the morning. I'll go back to bed. The sounds have stopped. Nothing to worry about but the *caballos.*"

He left her and hurried to the close-by meadow in which they had left the hobbled animals. There was a moon that night. He was able to see quite clearly. He saw two dark groups on the moonlit meadow when he passed out of the trees. One represented the horses of the party, the other the burros.

The horses snorted in fright as he approached, and began hobbling frantically away. But his gentle tones reassured them, and they finally permitted him to come quite near.

Then it was that he discovered that Skip Tye's salt-and-pepper gray was not with the black and Barbarian. He searched for the animal all over the meadow, even approaching the burros to see if, in a thoughtless moment, the horse had descended from his dignity to associate with the long ears. But the gray was nowhere to be found.

This puzzled him, and of course he thought at once of Tungapulla. Never had he seen the lame old man on a horse, however. He always preferred to walk. But it was extremely illogical to believe that the lost horse would wander from his companions out of the meadow. The only answer, then, was that the old medicine man had broken his settled routine and mounted the gray for a long, fast trip that night.

Here was a mystery that Star wanted to look into. So he decided not to go to bed again until Tungapulla had returned.

He went back to the edge of the woods in which the camp was located and squatted in the shadows. He filled his pipe from the short supply of tobacco that remained, and made himself as comfortable as possible. If Tungapulla was connected in some way with those mysterious rumbling sounds, he wanted to know the meaning of it. Slowly he puffed his pipe and waited, and——

The next thing he knew was that Fiquanda Tabango was shaking his shoulder vigorously.

"Wake up! Wake up!" she cried. "What on earth are you doing here, Bango? How long have you been here? Why, you're sound asleep this moment!"

This seemed almost true. Star opened his eyes lazily and tried to gaze around. For an instant he saw the meadow before him, and realized that bright sunlight was covering it. He saw the grazing burros and horses. Then he could hold his eyelids up no longer; and with a sigh he leaned against the girl's knees and went to sleep again.

"Why, Star!" her voice came to him as if from a tremendous distance. "What *is* the matter? Wake up! We should have been on the trail an hour ago. I called and called, but you didn't answer. Then I began hunting for you, but couldn't find you. I just happened to see you sitting here. Are you ill?"

She shook him again, and once more the man opened his eyes, grinned good-naturedly, and promptly went to sleep again.

"Oh! Oh!" he heard her wailing. "What has happened to him?" And then her voice came in his dull ears: "Tungapulla! Come here right away!" And the remainder of her shouting to the old man was in the Indian tongue that they used mostly when talking to each other.

Then Star must have gone sound asleep again, for he remembered noth-

ing more until he felt something being forced between his teeth. Liquid ran over his tongue and trickled from his mouth. He choked. Then the words:

"All right pretty soon maybe. Tungapulla's medicine good. You wait."

And sure enough, Star roused himself within half an hour, blinked about, and staggered to his feet. He felt dizzy and very foolish, but no sickness whatever. He heard the voices of Fiquanda and Tungapulla in the woods, and meandered toward them slowly.

"Well!" Fiquanda Tabango greeted him. She and Tungapulla were eating breakfast. Tye was still wrapped in his blankets and snoring lustily. "Back from the dead at last, are you? How you worried me, Star! Why, you were just like father is! What on earth is the meaning of this? Have you eaten anything? Any plant? Did you pick some green thing out there in the meadow and chew on it?"

"No," answered Star shortly, sinking down beside the two.

"What were you doing there?"

Star answered in Spanish, so that Tungapulla would be sure to understand:

"I was waiting for Tungapulla to ride back on your father's horse. And I went to sleep suddenly. I was smoking, I remember. I ate nothing."

Fiquanda's black eyes roved in puzzlement to the inscrutable face of the old medicine man.

"Tungapulla, did you ride my father's horse last night?" she demanded. "I haven't seen you in the saddle for years."

"No saddle," replied the Indian. "No bridle. Tungapulla no need."

"Then you rode. Where?"

Tungapulla made no reply at once. His beady black eyes shot a quick glance at Star, then settled on his plate.

"Answer me!" the girl demanded.

"Come high sun Tungapulla show," he said shortly.

"We'll not be here when the sun is high," she reminded him. "We'll be out of the Valley of the Monkeys by noon."

"No.

"I say yes!" she shot back belligerently.

"Come high sun Tungapulla show you no," he reiterated stubbornly. "You wait. No can go now. Trail *vamos.*" Then, changing suddenly to Spanish: "The place of the cells of peril is ready for them who come searching for the Valley of the Monkeys. In three days they will come."

Fiquanda Tabango continued to ply him with questions, but he rose abruptly from the earth and stalked away through the trees. She shrugged and laughed at Star.

"He's hopeless when he begins to act like that. We'll just have to let him have his way until he gets ready to tell us what this is all about. 'Trail *vamos,*' he said. I don't think that he meant that the trail is gone. Do you know what I believe? I think he has closed the trail."

"How?"

"That rumbling last night. What on earth has he in mind, anyway?"

"I'm positive of one thing," Star told her. "I'm sure the old fox doped my tobacco with something."

"Star, you don't mean it! Then maybe——" She came to a pause and gazed at him, her red lips parted.

"Yes, the same thing occurs to me," he told her. "He may have doped Skip Tye, too."

"The *mari-mari-quat* plant!" she cried. "It has exactly that effect. It grows in Mexico and along the border. But I didn't know there was any of it in this part of the country."

"You forget that the Monkey Indians are supposed to have migrated from Old Mexico," he said. "They may have introduced the plant into this valley."

"You're right! You're right!" she

cried excitedly. "But father became drowsy before we entered the valley, Star."

"Just the afternoon previous to our entrance," he said. "It is quite possible that old Tungapulla stole out of camp the night before, made on into the valley, and got some of these plants. He's been doping Tye ever since. And he handed me a package last night. Confound him, anyway! What in thunder is the grand idea?"

"It's plain, in your case, that he didn't want you to follow him last night," she decided. "If you heard the sounds—which I am now positive were made by him—and got up to investigate, he knew that you probably would call him. Then, when he didn't answer, you'd discover that he was not there. And apparently he deduced just what you would do if you found out that my father's horse was gone. So he doped your tobacco so you would sleep soundly and not know when he rode in. I guess he gave you an overdose, though. He expected you to awake before morning, find the horse in its place, and go back to bed, feeling foolish for having gone to sleep on watch. Now, though, the overdose has made things different. We're onto him, and he'll have to make a complete confession of what he's been up to. There is no use for us to start out of the valley until we know what he is concealing from us. I doubt if we could get out, judging from the little he said. We'll have to humor him until noon."

They did not see the old man again that morning. He absented himself entirely from the camp, and they knew better than to search for him. But when the sun was directly overhead he came limping in, and stood beckoning to them from the outskirts of the camping place.

"Come," he adjured them in Spanish. "The sun is high."

They followed him in silence to a little rise that stood just beyond the closed-in meadow. He piloted them to the crest, where he squatted on his haunches and blinked at them as they climbed to places by his side.

"One minute—two minutes—maybe three minutes, look there," he said, pointing toward the crystal-clear peak of the lofty mountain that stood guard over the Valley of the Monkeys.

And as they looked, shading their eyes from the glare of the sun with their hands, they presently saw a column of black smoke ascending straight toward the sky from a bare spot on the mountainside.

Star had his binoculars out in an instant. He riveted his glance on the stream of smoke, while the girl stood with a trembling hand on his arm.

The stream of smoke disappeared as abruptly as it had spurted upward. Then a second column rose aloft. It disappeared. There followed three short puffs, then another long stream, then two short puffs.

"They're signaling, Indian fashion, with a wet blanket," said Glorious in an awed voice. "And it was I who told them how to do it! They have a man at each corner of the blanket. They clap it down over the smudge and stop the smoke entirely. Then they raise it and let the smoke stream upward, in a steady flow, or in short puffs, just as they choose. They're working out a code, Star, to tell others of their party, who are on the trail, how to get here."

Star was trying to cover the nearer stretches with his glasses, but the western cliffs that frowned down upon the Valley of the Monkeys were too high, and nothing but the sky line showed.

"We wouldn't be able to see their answering signal until they are quite near the valley," explained the girl. "Well, I guess we're in for it. Tucker and Dale have gotten a party of roustabouts together and are determined to get that gold at any cost. Now what, Star?

What can we do? Father is helpless. We can't take him on the trail in that condition, when any day we are likely to be discovered by the searching party. He can't help us hold them off."

"It looks very much as if we'll have to stay here," Star answered. "We can fight them better if we have command of the valley than we could on the open trail. And if I'm not very much mistaken, the man traps are set for them. And I wouldn't be surprised to find that Tungapulla has effectually blockaded the trail, not only making it impossible for them to get in, but imprisoning us. I think it's time for you to get after him, Glorious, and demand a show-down."

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRAPPED.

TUNGAPULLA blinked into the accusing eyes of the Glorious Wife of the Bear who Speaks in Battle.

"One—two—three days, the man with the eyes of blood all right again," he said.

"What!" cried Star. "He'll be all right in two or three days?"

"Yes—wake up slow. Two—three days—*bueno.*"

"Then you have been feeding him on *mari-mari-quat?*"

"*Si, señor.*"

"In heaven's name, why?"

"One moon—two moon—maybe three moon—the man with the bloody eyes of the desert toad no wake up. Sleep, sleep—all time. Talk with Great Spirit then."

"You were slowly murdering that man!" gasped Star in Spanish.

The old soothsayer shrugged and looked indifferently toward the turquoise sky. "So was Tungapulla commanded to do by the loon, who stands on one foot in the mountain lake. His eyes are evil. His heart is bad. He is not the father of the Glorious Wife of the Bear who Speaks in Battle. He should die."

Star and the girl stared at each other in consternation and unbelief.

"But now you say he will be all right in a few days," gulped Fiquanda. "Are you—are you giving him the same medicine you gave Bango this morning, to make him come awake?"

"*Si.*"

"Why have you changed your mind, Tungapulla?"

"Maybe we must fight," he answered. "Maybe we must fight the man who wears the star and the digger of dirt, and those whom they are bringing with them to the Valley of the Monkeys. The man with the eyes of the desert toad will make one more to defend the valley against them. They must not enter the Valley of the Monkeys. It belongs now to Bango and Fiquanda Tabango, and here they shall live forever, forgiven by the Great Spirit. So spoke the loon to Tungapulla many moons past."

"He's locked us in!" gasped Fiquanda. "Star, he's made it impossible for you and me to get out. He meant to kill my fath—he meant to kill Mr. Tye, and to imprison you and me in this valley to the end of our days!"

"Is that right?" demanded Star hotly.

"That is true," replied the stoic old Indian. "So the loon commanded Tungapulla. You cannot get out with the horses and burros. You cannot go on foot, for you will starve in the chaparral. Live here and be content. You are the Bear who Speaks in Battle. She is the Glorious Wife of the Bear who Speaks in Battle. The Great Spirit, the wise Quawteaht, has forgiven you now. Live in peace with each other for all time. For the Glorious Wife of the Bear who Speaks in Battle lives forever, and Quawteaht will cause her husband to live forever, too, so that he may care for her, his beloved daughter, and do her bidding."

"You horrible old fanatic!" blazed the girl. "You are crazy—I know it now! Oh, Tungapulla! What have you done? You have planned since before we started on this trip to get Star and me into the Valley of the Monkeys, kill the others of the party, and bottle us three up in here forever. That's why you insisted on my keeping still about the cells of peril. I see the whole plot now!"

His dark eyes came down from the clouds and settled in a glance of love on her handsome face. He rose stiffly to his feet, bowed low before her, and stood erect once more.

"Fiquanda Tabango," he said softly, and turned about and walked in dignity down to the smiling meadow.

Glorious and Starford looked at each other, neither knowing what to say. Neither could feel as angry with the simple-hearted and devoted old guardian of the girl as the situation seemed to call for. He had done his best, according to his lights, to make the two love each other and carry out the life schedule that his half-crazed brain had planned for them. He had been on the verge of murder, even, and still they could not bring themselves to denounce him. He was an Indian, old, wise in the wisdom of his people, devoted to his strange beliefs. Their hearts mellowed toward him in spite of the promptings of their more tutored consciences.

Star took one step toward the girl, and of a sudden she was looking straight up into his eyes.

"Glorious Wife of the Bear who Speaks in Battle," he said to her, "I love you. You are everything in life to me. I could be content forever, with you, in this Valley of the Monkeys. Our destiny has been worked out for us. If we can't get out—I—I shall be content. Do you love me, Fiquanda Tabango?"

"Yes," she answered softly. "I love you, Bango. I have loved you—always, it seems."

Then he folded her tenderly in his arms and kissed her lips. Tears fell on his hands as he lifted them to caress her long, black hair.

"Yes, Bango, I love you," she repeated. "It is destiny, it seems. I am not afraid—I am content."

Star looked up with a film in his eyes. His heart was beating wildly. It seemed that every bird in the mysterious sink was singing, that the river was shouting for joy, that the scented wind which traveled lazily over the Valley of the Monkeys was crooning soft music. And down below, at the farther edge of the bright meadow, Tungapulla had turned back toward them, and his head was bent forward and resting on his breast.

In half an hour the girl and the man were in their saddles and riding toward the place of the cells of peril to find out how Tungapulla had entrapped them and what he had done toward the defense of the valley. For the old man had disappeared after seeing his cherished dream come true; and they were unable to find him. It was about five miles from their camp site to the gruesome spot, and they had never visited it since passing through when they entered the valley on that moonlit night.

As they drew near to the gentle slope that led up to the place of the cells of peril, the saddle tramp saw the hideous face of the tall stone image grimacing at him above the tops of surrounding rocks. They entered the rocks, a strange collection of upstanding cigar-shaped natural obelisks quite startling in their regularity. It was like passing through a cemetery set with gigantic tombstones, and, higher than all the rest, towered the one which had been graven into the semblance of a manlike creature.

Through these the trail wound its

way over solid stone. Often the riders' knees were grazed by two of the pillars as they rode between them.

Then they came to a defile not over four and a half feet in width. On each side was solid stone to a height of several feet above their heads as they sat in their saddles. Here and there, where nature had failed to make a solid wall on one side, masonry had been resorted to by the dead people of the valley, and all crevices had thus been calked. So that there was no way to reach the valley except by passing through this narrow chute in solid stone.

Of a sudden the sorrel colt, that was in the lead, snorted and reared. At his forefeet yawned the first of the man traps. Star and Fiquanda dismounted and examined it.

It was as has been described, and on the floor of the conical-shaped hole lay the bleached skeletons of many animals. No attempt had been made to cover this hole, which was nearest to the valley proper. But when the pair had traveled a short distance beyond it, they came to one that had been carefully covered with boughs, sod, and leaves, so that by night a man might have walked straight into it before he realized that his footing had failed him.

"Tungapulla has been coming here regularly of nights for some time to cover the old traps," Star observed.

Then they rode on until they had squeezed their way past a dozen similar traps, all concealed as effectually as it was humanly possible to do the work.

Now they came to a portion of the rocky defile where the walls on either hand were higher, even, than theretofore. The tops of them were in some places thirty feet above their heads.

And then they were brought to a decided halt. In front of them, wedged firmly into the narrow chute, was an immense boulder as large as an ordinary mountain cabin. Beyond it was another; beyond that one a third. Their forward progress was effectually barred. While with ropes and other paraphernalia that their resourcefulness might hit upon, the man and girl might contrive to get beyond these obstructions, there was no possibility whatever of getting the horses and burros by. Fifty men could not have moved one of those wedged-in boulders.

Star gazed at them in absolute amazement. "These are what caused those ominous rumbling sounds last night," he stated. "Tungapulla was rolling these stones from the cliffs above into this rock-bound lane. But, in heaven's name, Jane, how could he accomplish it? It would have taxed the strength of twenty men to move one of these rocks when they were up above, and twice that number couldn't budge them now. We're absolutely imprisoned for life, girl. We dare not try to make it over the mountains without a well-supplied pack, and we can never get a four-footed creature over these obstructions."

"It seems to me," mused Fiquanda Tabango, "that he once told me something about this—when he first took me into the valley as a mere child, almost. There were so many things to interest me, however, that I guess I didn't pay much attention to this defensive feature of the Monkeys. I saw the other things—the man traps, for instance—and they stuck in my memory. But I didn't see these boulders up above. So I forgot about the matter entirely. Now, though, I have a faint recollection of his telling me about them.

"Let me see," she continued thoughtfully. "Would it be possible, if these rocks were perfectly balanced on the cliffs up there, for one man to pry them with a heavy bar—up and down, up and down—until they were swaying back and forth? And would they finally lose their balance and roll down into this rocky hallway? It seems to me that Tungapulla told me something like that."

"It sounds plausible," Star agreed. "And, as we are positive that Tungapulla was alone last night, it's the only answer. How he did it, though, matters not at all in our case. The question with us is, how are we ever going to get over them with the *caballos* and the canaries?"

She heaved a long sigh. "I guess we can't ever accomplish it, Bango."

"You seem pretty indifferent about it," he quickly remarked, eying her very closely.

"I think I am—now," she answered. "I have made a mess of finding my father. I would be ashamed, after what has happened, to show my face in Fandango or Encantadora again. Wouldn't everybody eye me, and laugh at me behind my back? Anyway, I don't care whether or not we ever return. I have lost my father, but I have found you, my dear. I'm little better than an Indian, you know. Civilization doesn't tempt me any more. I can be content here forever with you, Bango. If I had a father who wanted me to be—well, not so wild and unrestrained, we'll put it—things might be different. But as they are, I shall be satisfied here with you and Tungapulla until I die."

Starford Kirby was tempted. A wanderer himself, with a soul almost as free as hers, the delightful valley, with this delightful girl for his lifelong companion, made a strong appeal to the primitive in the man.. But he put temptation behind him. He was a product of civilization, a white man, an American. He believed in the progress of mankind, that some day a real civilization would grow out of the chaos of the so-called civilization of the day. He wanted to do his part in bringing this about.

However, it looked as if the matter had been taken entirely out of his hands by Tungapulla. So far as he could see now, the three of them might as well make up their minds to be content in the Valley of Monkeys for the remainder of their natural lives.

"If only we had some dynamite or black powder," he mused, "we could shoot those boulders to fragments and ride out over them. But there is no powder of any kind in Skip Tye's pack. I have wondered why he brought none along, when he expected to find gold here. The only answer was that it is placer gold, and that he knew explosives would not be necessary."

"That's it," said Fiquanda. "I told him all about that. It's in the river."

Star was very much interested, despite his firm resolution to forget the gold entirely.

"Is there much of it?" he asked.

"I really don't know. Tungapulla carried out a small bag of dust and nuggets. I don't know how long it took him to collect it. I was more interested in other things—the articles left by the Monkey Indians when the smallpox wiped them out, the picture writing on the walls of the cliff dwellings, and things like that. What does a girl of fifteen, who has lived for seven years with vagabondish Indians, care about gold dust and little nuggets?"

"Skip Tye brought along pans, I know," he said. "But so far they've not been used. But do you know, Fiquanda, that curiosity got the better of me on several occasions, and I couldn't help examining the river banks when I was alone? I've mined quite a little, especially placer mining, and I saw no evidences whatever of gold in that river. Why, I thought—don't just know where I got the notion—that gold would be sticking out from every rock crevice in this valley. I confess that I'm disappointed. I think Skip Tye will be, too, if he gets on his feet again. By the way, what do you know about the source of that river? I've never been to the extreme eastern end of the valley, where it seems to rise. Something else seemed always to occupy our at-

tention when we planned to travel that way."

"It's a long ride, I imagine," she returned. "And we didn't dare go very far from camp, with my father—with Mr. Tye in that condition. Tungapulla can tell you more about the source of the river than I can."

"Have you never been to it?"

She reddened. "I didn't say I hadn't, did I? I merely intimated that Tungapulla really knows more about it than I do."

He tried to look into her eyes, but she kept them hidden with her long, silky lashes. He realized that she was keeping something from him, for some reason or other. But he dropped the subject immediately, having schooled himself as best he could to not permit his mind to dwell on the fortune which the Valley of the Monkeys was supposed to hold in trust.

"Well," he said, "I guess we have seen all that there is to be seen here. We're trapped in, and Tucker and Dale's expedition is held out—so far as riding in is concerned. They can get over those stones without their animals, however. It's easier to get in over them than to get out. That's part of Tungapulla's plan. The boulders not only hold up prisoners, but they force the invaders to come in afoot, if at all. They will fall into the man traps more easily afoot than in the saddle. For, in all probability, they will come at night. And a horse can take care of himself better than a man can after dark. Horses have an uncanny instinct. They usually know when insecure footing is just ahead of them. They might snort and rear and warn their riders, where a man on foot would blunder straight into these hidden pits. It looks as if the peace of the valley will shortly be interrupted in any event. Let's ride back to camp, find Tungapulla, and hold a council of war. There's trouble ahead of us, Fiquanda."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE FIGURE ON THE RIM.

FOUR days had passed since the dwellers in the Valley of the Monkeys had seen the first smoke signals arising from the distant mountainside. And still the valley was as calm and peaceful as before.

Every day, though, they had stationed themselves at sunup and at noon on the little rise to which Tungapulla had conducted them to show them the smoke. And on schedule, twice a day, they saw the far-off signals repeated.

But that part of the expedition which was making for the valley was evidently having much difficulty, despite the aid of those on the mountainside. Tungapulla had led Tye's party in in a much shorter time, for Tungapulla knew the way. It might be days yet before the invaders drew near enough to the great sink for the occupants of it to see the smoke signals that they sent up to show their whereabouts to their confederates.

Skip Tye was improving rapidly. The counteracting medicine that Tungapulla was dosing him with was swiftly bringing about the desired result. He was sluggish still, but now he did not sit or lie for hours and sleep, as formerly had been the case. He stretched and yawned, as if slowly waking from a long slumber, but his mental faculties had almost been returned to him completely. No one told him, of course, what had been the matter with him, for he was as cross as a bear, anyway. Neither had he been informed that Tucker and Dale were probably marching upon the valley to wrest his expected treasure from his hands.

On the fifth morning after the discovery of the signals, the columns of smoke arose from the mountainside at sunup as usual. After watching them, and vainly searching the sky line above the surrounding cliffs for an answering signal, Jane and Star returned to camp

to find Skip Tye hovering over picks and shovels and gold pans.

"I'm probably feelin' finer this mornin' than any mornin' since we come here," he announced quite cheerfully. "It's time for me to be gettin' to work."

Star thought that the man had not the slightest conception of the considerable space of time that had elapsed since their advent.

Tye stood upon his feet, and his galloping eyes played over Star's face.

"Seein' you ain't a-tall interested in this here gold, brother," he said, "I guess I'll go at it alone. Jane"—he turned toward her, as she stood there so immovable, eying him with calm coolness—"I want you to show me the likeliest place to begin pannin'—you and the Siwash."

"All right," she told him quietly. "Directly after breakfast."

"Good!" cried Tye. "Where's that confounded Cholo? Is breakfast ready? I wanta eat and get to work."

Breakfast was ready, and Tungapulla was patiently waiting for them to gather round. They ate in silence, for the most part, and directly afterward the girl spoke a few words to the Indian in a strange tongue, whereupon she nodded to Tye, and the three set off with pans and tools.

Star was left to his own resources for the remainder of the day. They returned at night, and Tye was very silent, almost glum. He scowled at everybody, particularly the girl.

Next morning they were at it again at an early hour, Fiquanda having left Star to look at the smoke signals after they had gone. He saw no more than he had seen on previous occasions, and decided that the advance party was still wandering about, probably lost, in the maze of forest and chaparral that surrounded the Valley of the Monkeys.

Tye was as surly as a bear when, tired and hungry and covered with mud, he returned to camp with the meek Indian and seemingly indifferent girl that night.

Another uneventful day went the way of all time; and in camp that night Skip Tye's mood was almost unbearable.

In the midst of the evening meal he suddenly raised his fist and crashed it into the palm of his hand.

"You're a fool!" he lashed out at Fiquanda. "You're a plain, ign'rant fool! They ain't enough gold in that river to pay for the outfittin' fer the trip in here! I know somethin' about placer minin', I do! I been all up an' down that river, and the gold ain't there. There's some, I'll admit. I got a little. Twenty dollars' worth, maybe, altogether, sence I started. Man would starve to death pannin' in that mud hole! Yuh've brung me here fer nothin', kid! Darn the luck, anyway—I wish I'd never set eyes on you! What an ass I was to listen to a half-baked girl and a village clown like this Siwash here!"

"You would come," the girl reminded him demurely, her eyes on her plate. "I warned you that I personally didn't know much about the gold, and what there might be of it in the valley. But you had heard Tungapulla's stories—heard them secondhand, I guess—which were probably added to here and there by his listeners until one might think that this valley was lined with gold. I told you there was a chance of your being disappointed, Mr. Tye, but you were afire to make the venture."

"*Mister Tye!*" he roared. "What're you callin' me Mister Tye for?"

"Judge for yourself," she replied.

"Kirby!" The reddish, restless eyes roved accusingly over Star's face. "What 'a' you been crammin' down this girl's throat now?"

"Nothing. Nothing new, at any rate," Star retorted quietly. "I've known from the first, Tye, that you aren't Jane's father. I think she believes it now."

Tye leaped to his feet. "And she can believe it, if that's what she's hankerin' for!" he howled. "Let her believe it! Who gives a whoop? Not me, by gosh! Drag me out here on this fool gold hunt, when they ain't enough color in that stream to gild a kid's wooden dagger with! Gold's been took outa here, I'll admit. How much I can't say. But the bozo that discovered it got it all. *Let* her believe it! I'm sick of her! Listen, you!" He pointed a crooked finger at her. "I ain't your daddy, and never was, an' never will be! Get me? So how d'you like that?"

"It suits me perfectly," was Fiquanda's unconcerned reply. "I know that at last you are speaking the truth. For the past month, Mr. Tye, I have been expecting that such a confession would come from you sometime. I'm glad it's out at last. I'm glad, too, that you didn't find your gold. That's what you wanted—gold, not me."

She kept her black eyes steadily on his whitening face. Then, with a smile, she glanced triumphantly at Star.

Tye started in to rage about again, but Star stopped him.

"You're lucky to have your reason—your life," he told the cowman. "You've been at death's door, man, and know nothing at all about it. And as for that, you may be lucky to get out of this valley alive, gold or no gold. Dale and Elmer Tucker are after that supposed gold and your yellow hide, as well. They're marching upon the Valley of the Monkeys this very minute, guided in by men stationed on the tall mountain we crossed, and maneuvering them with smoke signals. They're due here any day—to-night! Put that in your pipe and see how it smokes! Better forget your animosity and get ready to fight."

Dawn, and high in the sky two columns of blue smoke arose, one from the mountainside far off, the other seen above the sky line that looked like the end of the world above the cliffs that guarded the western side of the Valley of the Monkeys. Tucker and Dale were close at hand. A few hours' march and they would be able to look down into the sink of mysteries and plan for the trip over the hazardous trail. Would they come at night, leave their horses, and crawl over the boulders that locked the trail—plunging into the man traps? Or would they come when the sun was bright, be able to see the treacherous pits, and avoid them entirely? Everything seemed to depend on whether they came when the valley was flooded with yellow sunshine or when the pale moon alone rode the heavens to light their precarious passage!

Noon—and Star Kirby's binoculars were trained on the tiny figure of a mounted man who stood on the lip of the western precipice and gazed in awe down into the Valley of the Monkeys. Then three more men took their places beside him.

They disappeared from sight. Up on the side of the far-off mountain no column of smoke arose toward the bay-blue sky. The feat had been accomplished. No more signals were necessary to guide the wandering band of four to the valley of their quest.

Three o'clock, p. m. Star's glasses picked up an antlike form creeping down the distant trail that led to the boulders which locked the Valley of the Monkeys—to the place of the cells of peril just below them. He descended afoot. Star lost track of him after a while, but in half an hour longer the glasses picked him up again as he was returning slowly to the top.

He had been sent ahead as a scout, to familiarize himself with the trail. He had passed into the rocky defile just

above the valley's floor; had discovered the boulders. Had he climbed over them and found the man traps just below? Star was sure that he had not. While he might have negotiated the boulders, he could not have climbed back to the trail without the aid of his companions and a considerable length of rope. Rope he did not carry.

Would the main body advance that night? Would they use dynamite to blow the boulders out of their way and enter on horses? Or would they fasten ropes above the boulders and leave them there to be ascended when they had entered afoot and had had their pleasure in the valley?

Star thought they would scarcely want to warn Tye's party by explosions that they were upon them. Then they would use ropes and enter afoot.

Would the man traps catch them then?

Eight o'clock—with the valley shrouded in total darkness, with the four who had entered it over a month before hidden close to the place of the cells of peril, waiting nervously in the gloom of the natural obelisks that stood like gigantic tombstones in a forgotten cemetery of the gods. Close by were the cells of peril. Just beyond them hung the boulders that locked the valley, as silent as if that had been their lodging place for centuries.

Then came sounds—faint voices—the dull scrape of horseshoes on the rocks. A light beyond the boulders!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VOICE FROM THE MAN TRAP.

FULLY armed, Skip Tye, Fiquanda Tabango, and Starford Kirby waited, with bated breath. Tungapulla stood motionless, his staff in one hand, the thumb of the other hooked negligently in his waistband.

The voices became more distinct; the ruddy reflection of the light beyond the boulders more pronounced.

"They ain't no use fer me to call to 'em an' tell 'em they ain't no gold here," muttered Tye. "Tucker and Dale wouldn't believe me. And, bein' sore on you an' me, too, they wouldn't give up this chance to get even with us whether they believed it or not. Looks like we gotta fight it out, if they get into the valley. Jest wait an' keep calm. They got a light an' we ain't. If they get in, an' don't all fall into the Siwash's traps, pour it into 'em, son—fer they'll get us if we don't! That fella, Tucker, is an ornery critter. He's mean as dirt! Get him first!"

A mumble of voices came to them from beyond the barricade. It seemed that the entire party of four were together now. The reflection of the light trembled across the rock walls. Then there came scraping sounds, grunts, sharp commands. This for perhaps five minutes, then all was silent again. But the light still gleamed.

An owl hooted dismally. The wind soughed weirdly through the thin scattering of chaparral bushes whose roots had found precarious lodgment in the rocky place of the cells of peril.

Then came a frenzied howl, followed immediately by a second. These sounds were as near to screams of terror as the bass voices of men can render. The light had disappeared. There came a great snapping of boughs and twigs; and next the excited voices of only two men, talking rapidly.

"Two," complacently observed Tungapulla, "have fallen into the cells of peril."

"Hey!" came the shout. "What's the matter, Tuck? Where are you?"

"I don't know that voice," whispered Fiquanda to Star. "But it seems that Tucker is trapped."

Only muffled howls as an answer to the question came to the ears of the tense listeners. Then:

"The've fell in a hole! Le's run back an' get one o' the ropes."

There was no light. Probably one of the men who had fallen into the trap had carried it down with him.

There were hurrying footsteps, barely heard on the solid stones. Then came another scream—a hoarse yell of horror that chilled the heart. Another voice joined in. There were frantic yells and curses, as two men seemed to be raging at each other in a deadly struggle. Then silence, save for a groaning that seemed to drift to the ears of the listeners from the bowels of the earth.

For five minutes, while they almost held their breath to listen, there came no sounds but these muffled groans.

Tungapulla spoke.

"The two who came first," he said, "passed the first of the cells of peril unharmed and fell into the second. The other two who ran back in the darkness to rescue them with ropes have fallen into the first of the cells of peril. All are now our prisoners. Let us see what the cells of peril have trapped for us."

Cautiously, in almost total darkness, the four slipped out and through the cigar-shaped rocks, guided by the Indian. He halted presently and held up a hand to bring those behind him to a stop. After listening intently for a time, and hearing nothing but mumbling sounds from the pits in the rocky floor, he lighted a pine knot and limped forward again, with the blazing torch above his head.

But he did not step to the brim of the first of the man traps that he came upon. He kept back so that there would be no possibility of a malicious shot from the hole sending a bullet into his body.

"You," he said to Skip Tye. "Speak!"

"Hello, down in there!" called Tye. "Did you step on a hole in the carpet?"

"Who's that?" came a shout from below.

"This is Skip Tye, brother!" the cattleman replied. "And if I ain't mistaken, I'm listenin' to the sweet tones o' the voice of Elmer Tucker."

"Yes, it's Tucker!" came back the call. "An' Dale's in here with me. We fell in a deep hole in the rocks. My arm's broke, an' Dale fell on his nut, I guess, for he ain't croaked sense he lit. Get me outa here, Tye. I got somethin' to tell you."

"I'll bet a clippin' o' cat's whiskers you got somethin' to tell me, Elmer!" jeered Tye.

"Listen, Skip," came Tucker's wheedling tones, "when you didn't come back to Encantadory fer so long, me an' Dale we got to worryin' about you. So we organized a search party, and——"

"A search party fer Old Man Gold!" Tye interrupted him. "You can't think fast enough, Tuck, to make up a good story on the spur o' the moment as to why you're here. But I forgot—you was sayin' that you was huntin' fer us, eh? Well, you've found us. What now?"

"Get me outa here, Tye—please!" Tucker pleaded.

"Toss up four guns," ordered Tye, "and we'll consider the proposition."

"We ain't got four—honest, Skip! Dale an' me both packs only one. He couldn't use thatun, an' you know full well I wasn't never a two-gun man!"

"Well, pitch up two, then," commanded the rancher, "an' we'll be ready to consider this thing further."

"Where's our pals?" asked Tucker. "What've you done to them, Tye? They's two more in our party."

"They was accommodatin' cusses, too," laughed Skip. "When they was runnin' to get ropes to drag you two out, they stepped on another hole in the carpet. But don't ferget the guns. You got one good arm, ain't you?"

There was no reply, but in a few seconds a six-shooter thumped on the rocks at Tye's feet. Then a second clattered beside it.

"That's fair enough as far as it goes," Tye accepted, "but we can see better after sunrise whether er not you're totin' another gun er so. We'll wait till then, Tuck. And now we gotta see what kind o' prize the other hole has got for us."

"Skip, my arm's hurtin' me like the devil, and——"

"Well, ain't that too bad, now!" And Tye motioned to Tungapulla to light the way to the other trap.

"Who's down in here?" demanded Tye, as the blazing pine knot revealed the gaping mouth of the first of the man traps and the fringe of broken branches and sod about it.

"Hello, who's that?" came the muffled reply.

"Me—Skip Tye, of the Double O. Who are you?"

"Where's Kirby?"

"Here!" cried Star, his voice cracking with the word. "My heavens, I must be mistaken! Is that you, Mr. Lee?"

"Yes, it's Lee, Kirby!" came the answer. "There's another fellow in here with me. He's battered up considerably. He started to fall in as we were running back after ropes to get Dale and Tucker out. I grabbed him, and we thrashed about on the edge of this hole till he pulled me in on top of him. What's the meaning of all this, Kirby?"

"What's the meaning of your being here?" Star countered. "I can't quite understand this, Mr. Lee."

"I can explain it all when you've helped us out."

"Which'll be maybe to-morrow mornin'," put in Tye. "Toss up your guns, if you're packin' any, Mr. Lee, and when the sun's up, we'll look into your case. Who's that in there with you?"

"I don't suppose you know him," Lee returned. 'He's a man from my camp on the desert. I brought him along so that I would have some one to stand by me if Tucker and Dale got nasty, for any reason."

"Which was moderate wise of you, Mr. Lee," said Tye. "But what in the devil are you travelin' with that pair o' coyotes for? I thought you was a gentleman—the big man o' the desert country—the man that's determined I won't be sheriff of our flourishin', new county down there. What you snugglin' up with Dale and Tucker fer? Did you wanta meet Old Man Gold yourself up here in this god-forgotten valley?"

"I'll explain everything later," Lee replied. "I'm tossing up our guns—to satisfy you. My companion is pretty badly bruised up. He's quite harmless, anyway. Here they come now. Look out!"

Two more six-shooters rattled on the rocks, then came Lee's voice:

"There you have 'em. Now get a rope and help us out! I want to talk to Kirby."

"We'll take that under advisement," sneered Tye.

"No," said Starford Kirby quickly, stepping forward. "We must get Mr. Lee out at once. I'll admit that his coming here looks suspicious, but if he hadn't fallen in the man trap he probably would have been able to explain himself so that we would not mistrust him. I don't mistrust him now. He comes out at once."

Tye wheeled on Star with a snarl. "Now, looky here," he growled. "Who's runnin' this here thing, me or you?"

"I am," said Kirby firmly. "And don't for one moment get it into your head that you are. You stepped out of the captaincy of this party this morning. I'm the boss."

Tungapulla's right hand stole to the left side of his waist and settled on the hilt of his knife. Fiquanda's hand went to her hip, where the fingers outspread

themselves just above the butt of her six-shooter.

"I reckon you're probably the boss," admitted Tye. "You're three to one. I know when I got the worst of it."

"All right," accepted Star. "And, while we're on the subject, I might as well remind you that, since our enemies are powerless to do us any damage, you don't need to pack a six any longer. Slip her to me, brother—butt first!"

Tye shrugged and reached slowly for his gun. His reddish eyes galloped from side to side—those eyes that Star could never read.

"Don't try the old toss, Skip," he warned, as the stubby fingers closed over the handle. "I'm onto it. Butt first!"

Slowly the gun came out. There was a moment of hesitancy, while two pairs of eyes gleamed into each other. Then Tye laughed with a short snort.

"No, it wouldn't pay, Kirby," he said. "Here she is, butt first. But there's always another time, o' course."

Star passed Tye's revolver to Tungapulla. "Get the others," he ordered in the Indian dialect with which both were familiar. "Hide them in the rocks, then come back to me."

"Bango," muttered Tungapulla, bowing low, and then he limped away into the darkness.

When he returned, Star sent him for one of the ropes that the invaders had left hanging over the obstructing boulders in the trail. When he came back a second time the rope was lowered into the man trap, and in a few minutes Cameron Lee stood, panting from his exertions, on the brink.

Starford Kirby thrust forth a hand. "Welcome to our valley, Mr. Lee," he said. "And I'm ready to hear your explanation of your presence here right now."

"I must talk with you in private, Kirby," said Lee. "I—I can't bring myself to explain to anybody but you."

"All right," said Star. He turned to Fiquanda Tabango. "We've almost all night before us," he told her. "Might as well come to an understanding now as any time. I'll step aside with Mr. Lee and hear what he has to say. You're in command in my absence. Have Tye and Tungapulla get the other fellows out with the rope. You stand by and see that nobody tries any funny business. Can you handle the situation, Glorious?"

"Easily," she replied.

"Do as she tells you to, Skip," Star enjoined the cattleman.

After which, being supplied with another lighted pine knot by the medicine man, he moved away from the others in company with Cameron Lee.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WHERE THE TRAIL PARTED.

THE man called Bango stuck his burning pine knot into a niche in the rock wall so that its flare would light the face of Cameron Lee.

"You're the last man whose voice I expected to hear from that pit," he said. "What on earth has brought you here, Mr. Lee, in company with such a pair of hounds as Dale and Tucker?"

"I was forced to come, Kirby," replied the older man, and he showed that he was undergoing some great emotion. "In the first place, things have gone wrong on the desert since you left. I refer to my land project. Haskins and I have about cleaned up with our railroad work down there, and were on the point of dissolving partnership, so that I could throw my all into this land deal and do my utmost to swing it. But a couple of moneyed men of Los Angeles whom I was depending on to back me up have quit me cold. There's been some knocking going on, I think, and they took the breath out of me recently by declining to advance any money for bringing the wa-

ter from that mountain lake down to my land. They claim that, after investigation, they have reached the conclusion that the land isn't worth the expenditure.

"That knocked me flat on my back, Kirby. I thought I had 'em firmly hooked. I went ahead on that conviction and pitched my all into the deal—and now I'm left holding the sack. So I—I decided to come up here with Dale and Tucker."

"I don't think I understand what your coming here with Dale and Tucker has to do with your reclamation project," Star told him.

"I'm trying to get around to that, Kirby. Give me time. I want to tell you another reason why I came here with these birds.

"Tucker," he continued, "has been running things to suit himself on the desert since Tye left. He's advertised it far and wide that Tye is only posing as the father of that girl in order to get her to lead him to the gold in this valley. Spite work, you see. Then, besides that, he's been raising the devil generally. He captained another raid on Fandango, and there was a bitter fight. Fandango, thinking itself secure from the raids of the Encantadora people because of Tye's absence, were taken off their guard. Encantadora cleaned house with them that night. But Fandango still holds the courthouse and the records, such as they are. It's still the county seat, or was when we hit the trail.

"But the result of that successful battle was that Tucker came out immediately and announced himself as a candidate for the sheriff's office in the fall election. I was afraid that, with you away, he would win. He'd ruin me if he was elected to that office. He's as bad as Tye. So I went to him with a proposition.

"I knew that he couldn't afford to outfit an expedition into the mountains to continue the hunt for the Valley of the Monkeys. I knew that he wanted to go—that he was wondering what had become of Tye and the rest of you. So I offered to raise the money to outfit a pack train for the trip, and volunteered to go along, in the event that he would withdraw from the race for sheriff.

"He consented immediately, for such an outfit as is required to get to this place costs a neat little sum of money. Of course, Tucker stipulated that Dale should accompany us. I had to give in to that, but I made a counter-stipulation that a man from our camp should go along, too. He's in that hole back there—name's Hastings. Don't know whether you've seen him or not. And there are two of my men, at ten dollars a day apiece, waiting back there on the mountainside—the fellows who steered us here by signaling. Another is guarding our camp up on the rim. I wasn't going to be caught out here in the mountains alone with those two scoundrels, you can bet. So we got things together and made the trip.

"I was worried about you, too, Kirby—you and that girl. So I—so here I am."

"Yes, I understand about all that you've told me," said Star. "Now come across with the rest. You're keeping something back. There is another and more important reason why you, of all the men that I know on the desert, made this difficult trip. Let's have it."

Cameron Lee cleared his throat uncomfortably. "Kirby," he stated in a voice that shook a trifle, "that girl—your Fiquanda Tabango—is my daughter."

"What's that? Fiquanda your daughter!"

"Yes. Her name is Jane Lee. I am her father."

Star Kirby stared at him in unbelief. "You were a long time finding it out," he said witheringly. "Are you

sure that, since those financiers have failed you, you don't need her gold to help you out of your difficulty down there?"

"I expected you to say that, Kirby," returned Lee, licking his lips in embarrassment. "And I don't care whether she's got any gold or not. I want her. She's my daughter. I'll explain everything to her if you'll pave the way for my confession."

"Not quite yet," Star told him grimly. "Fiquanda Tabango means a great deal more to me now than she did when you last saw me. We're as good as engaged, though we've not mentioned the matter. We've confessed our love for each other, though, and the rest will follow as a matter of course."

"I'm glad, Kirby," said Lee. "I think, however, that I knew it was coming some day. I'm glad it's you."

"Thank you," and Star's tones were a trifle cool. "Now, what is it, please, that you want to tell her?"

"That I'm her father, man! Can't you understand?"

"Let's see your right shoulder," said Star. "That may help to convince me that you're the goods."

"The tattoo mark is gone," Lee told him. "I had it taken out with carbonic acid gas years ago. But I'll show you the scar."

He pulled down his shirt, and on the tip of his shoulder Star saw a well-defined scar of a roundish shape.

"That is scarcely the shape of a soldier with a rifle," he said.

"My flesh was frozen by the carbonic acid gas," Lee claimed. "I had it turned on from a big cartridgelike contrivance, such as are used in soda fountains. The gas, which was so cold that it seemed as if my flesh were afire, froze a spot on my shoulder where it struck. You couldn't expect it to leave a scar the exact shape of the tattooed design, could you?"

"Perhaps not. I know nothing at all about it. But if you knew yourself to be Jane's father months ago, why didn't you make yourself known to her?"

"There's a story back of that, Starford, my boy. I'll tell it to her," he said quietly.

"You'll tell it to me first, or I refuse to intercede for you," was Star's demand.

"All right—I'll give it to you.

"John Mansfield," he began, "the man who married Jane's mother after she and I had separated, was my closest friend in the town where Jane was born. Mansfield killed a man. I was convinced that it was in self-defense, but the evidence pointed conclusively to cold-blooded murder. So, as I had just lost my wife through the divorce proceedings, and was footloose and heart-free, I shouldered the killing, for the sake of my best-loved friend, and beat it.

"Mansfield, I learned later, showed his gratitude by marrying my divorced wife, Jane's mother.

"It was Jane's mother's brother whom Mansfield killed. A family quarrel, Kirby—an episode in a long-standing family feud. My wife's family were all Southerners, who had migrated from Georgia and settled as a colony in that town. They ran the town. That's why I knew that John Mansfield would get the worst of it if he——"

"Was Mansfield a Southerner, too?" Star quizzed sharply.

"Yes, he'd drifted out there from Georgia after the colonization by my wife's people.

"So that's why, Star, that I didn't make myself known to her when she came hunting for her father among the railroad outfits. I was afraid that, if I made myself known to her, she would in some way eventually get in touch with my divorced wife's family, back in Texas, and they would come gunning for me. A rather cowardly rea-

son, I'll admit, but—but there it is, Kirby."

"But I myself, in telling you what Jane told me about her history, made it clear that Mansfield deserted her mother in El Paso while Jane was still in the convent."

"I know, Kirby. And I should have let you know the truth right then. But you must remember that, even though Mansfield had run off long ago, the folks at Lenora still think that I killed my wife's brother. They never forget, those Southern feudists. But I had fully made up my mind to come across with the truth after that last talk I had with you. And then you beat it unexpectedly before I got around to it. And I heard that Tye had gone with the girl, too."

"Lenora, eh? Is that the name of the town where Jane was born—where you married her mother?"

"That's it—Lenora, Texas."

"Well, all this is a shocking surprise to me, of course," Star declared. "And now, old-timer, I've something to say that may shock you."

"Let's have it."

"Skip Tye has panned the river in this valley from one end to the other. The gold is supposed to be in the river. He raked together about twenty dollars' worth in several days of hard work. He claims that the gold story is a complete farce, and he's the most disgusted man in California. Now is Jane Mansfield your daughter, Mr. Lee?"

"She is," Lee promptly returned. "I want her, not the gold she may or may not have. I'll pull through some way. I want my daughter."

"Then, by golly, you can have her if she wants you!" cried Star, and held forth his hand. "Come on—I'll do my best for you. I'm sorry I had to doubt you, Mr. Lee, but Fiquanda's interests are my own now. I'm watching out for them. But tell me, before we go to her—what about your daughter and wife whom you once told me were dead?"

"That," Lee returned, "was a barefaced lie, Kirby."

"All right, I guess you had reason for lying. We all do—sometimes, I think."

They found, when they rejoined the others, that Tye and Tungapulla had helped Tucker, Dale, and the man named Hastings out of the man traps. Dale was still unconscious, and Hastings was suffering from his bruises, while Elmer Tucker nursed a broken arm in silence.

"We'd better be on the move to camp, Fiquanda," said Star. "Let Tungapulla and Tye go ahead and help these fellows, and you and Mr. Lee and I will follow later. At camp we'll do what we can for the wounded, and try to get out of here to-morrow morning. That is, if——" He turned to Lee. "Bring any dynamite along?" he asked.

"Plenty of it," Lee replied. "Trust an old railroader not to go into the woods without a stick or two of giant."

"Then we can shoot the boulders to-morrow morning and be on our way out of here. There's nothing to keep us now. Let the others go on, Glorious. Mr. Lee has something to tell you—something that I hope you'll be glad to hear."

The Glorious Wife of the Bear who Speaks in Battle did not interrupt Cameron Lee once as he repeated all that he had previously told Star Kirby. Her dark eyes smoldered, however, as he finished rather lamely, and held out his arms to her.

Then suddenly she smiled, and great tears filled her eyes. And next moment she was in her father's arms.

"Oh, I wanted it to be you all along," she sobbed happily. "The way you often looked at me almost convinced me, months ago, that you were my father and didn't want to claim me. But it's all right now. I'm glad to be Jane

Lee. I could never doubt you—daddy!"

There were mixed emotions in the camp beside the river next morning. Dale and the man called Hastings were sore and bruised, and Tucker was suffering from his broken arm, which Star had carefully set for him. Tye was the gloomiest man on earth. But Fiquanda Tabango, Star, and Cameron Lee were in high spirits, to say nothing of the enigmatical old medicine man, Tungapulla.

They were packed and ready for the long trail at an early hour. When they reached the obstructions in the passageway to the valley, Lee dynamited the boulders, and a little subsequent work cleared the trail entirely.

Then they mounted slowly to the top of the grim cliff that overlooked the Valley of the Monkeys on the west. When they reached it, all looked down into the smiling sink for fully a minute, then Tungapulla stoically led the way into the chaparral which the coyote had planted after the wicked crow had burned the forest to the ground.

Days later, weary and sore, they reached the desert, and as the pack train was nearing the rival towns, Fiquanda Tabango called a halt.

"Mr. Tye," she said, "please ride up close to me. You, too, Bango—and you, Mr. Lee. I have something important to tell you three in secret. It will make two of you extremely happy, and one of you extremely sad."

At Fiquanda's request, Lee and Star had said nothing to the others about the new happiness that had come to the contractor and the girl. And Fiquanda had not addressed Lee as her father throughout the trip. So there was still a surprise in store for Scipio Tye.

The three men drew their horses near to her.

"For certain reasons, which will soon become evident, I couldn't tell this in the Valley of the Monkeys," she told them, while the others of the party looked on curiously. Then she turned her eyes on Scipio Tye. "Mr. Tye," she said, "I want you to know that you were undergoing a test during those last few days before Tucker's relief party came into the valley. I thought that you would break under the strain of that test and let the cat out of the bag. You did. You confessed that you were not my father, and merely wanted the gold. You failed to pass the examination. There is gold in the Valley of the Monkeys—plenty of it. The Indians collected it from the river bed years and years ago and made trinkets of it. It is hidden in a place that I shall tell certain people about when we are ready for another expedition. That gold would have been yours, Mr. Tye, if you hadn't failed to pass my simple test.

"I'm not such a fool as I seem to be. And now, Mr. Starford Kirby, I am speaking to you as well as to Scipio Tye. And even if I were a fool, I have a counselor whose advise is worth considering every moment of the day—my devoted Tungapulla. I didn't go on that trip as blindly as you and Tye imagined. While I wanted with all my heart to accept you as my father, Mr. Tye, I had been determined from the first to test you out. If, failing to find the gold, you had still claimed to be my father, had still been affectionate and showed that you cared for me, you would have found your treasure, and I would have been your slave for life. And now, Mr. Scipio Tye, how do *you* like *that?*"

"You mean—you mean they's gold hid there, after all?"

"Lots of it. But it's not for you."

"Why—why, Jane!" Skip Tye's face was as red as the sunset. "I—I——"

He came to a floundering stop, and then came a brutal laugh from Starford Kirby.

"Don't try it, Tye," the saddle tramp

advised. "For Heaven's sake, don't try to eat your words! If you attempt to tell Fiquanda that you were only fooling her—only talking through your hat in your great anger—I'll be tempted to knock you down. I couldn't stand that, Tye! It would be so funny that I'd have to kill you, I guess, for such a rich humorist as that belongs to the immortals."

"But, confound it——!"

"Yes, just confound it!" laughed Star maliciously. "There's nothing else to be said."

"I'll have that gold!" There was a dangerous, almost maniacal light in the reddish, galloping eyes. "It's mine! Who outfitted this expedition? Me, that's who! I'll have that gold, I tell you!"

"The gold is for my real father," said Fiquanda soberly. "This is my father, Mr. Tye," and she reached forth a hand and laid it in one of Cameron Lee's.

"What!" gasped Skip Tye.

"Think it over at your leisure," laughed Fiquanda. "We must be going, now. This is the parting of the ways. You turn off here for Encantadora—you and Dale and Tucker—while the rest of us go to the right to my father's railroad camp. And in a week, when we've rested up a bit, father and Star and Tungapulla and I will return to the Valley of the Monkeys. For my father needs funds with which to carry on his big work here on this lovable old desert. Don't try to follow us, Mr. Tye—we'll be prepared to give you the worst of it if you do. Good-by, good-by, Mr. Tye!"

The outfit split in two. The defeated conspirators, led by the sorrowful man with the galloping eyes, moved slowly off toward Encantadora. And the others marched triumphantly toward Fandango and the construction camp of Haskins & Lee.

Ahead of them, with his long staff, stalked Tungapulla, disciple of the loon; and in his wrinkled features it seemed that there was written all the cunning and all the wisdom in the world.

TO DAM CANON OF THE GILA

THE first step toward construction of the new Coolidge Dam across the cañon of the Gila River near San Carlos, Arizona, to provide irrigation water for the Pima Indians living on the Gila River reservation was taken a short time ago. The expenditure of fifty thousand dollars was authorized by the secretary of the interior out of appropriations amounting to four hundred and fifty thousand dollars made immediately available in the interior department 1926 appropriation act. Construction of this reclamation project by the Bureau of Indian Affairs at a cost of five and a half million dollars has already been provided in a special act. In addition to irrigating the Indian lands, water will be furnished to other public and private lands along the Gila River.

This initial expenditure of fifty thousand dollars is to be used in perfecting plans determining the total area to be included in the project and appraising various tracts of land within this area in excess of one hundred and sixty acres to be purchased by the government. It will also be necessary to relocate the tracks of the Southern Pacific Railroad which now runs across the reservoir site. Still another preliminary to be disposed of is the matter of Apache Indian rights to the land that is to be flooded.

Put to Plowin'

By

Herbert Farris

Author of "He Ate 'Em Clean," etc.

IT was almost a year after he had migrated from Michigan and homesteaded in the foothills just back of Colby's Crossing, thirty miles from the village of Drydust, that Dan Lonnigan learned that his ranch was located in a nest of cattle and horse thieves. The fact that his neighbors, quiet, soft-spoken men for the most part, were "rustlers," never entered his honest head, until one day late in the fall.

Returning in a buckboard from Drydust, where with his daughter, Patsy, he had gone for supplies, he came unexpectedly upon his nearest neighbor and his neighbor's son, a stripling of twenty. It was at the foot of a steep little pitch that he came upon them, and he pulled up abruptly for a word with these men whom he considered his friends. But before he could utter a sound, amazement paralyzed his tongue. The Lowdens, father and son, had suddenly whipped out their six-shooters, and, although neither of them had made any attempt to cover him, their attitude was certainly hostile.

"Well," demanded Jeff Lowden, while his son, Jack, glowered silently at his elbow, "what're you goin' to do about it?"

"Do about what?" Lonnigan gasped. "I don't understand what you're driving at!"

It was now Jeff Lowden's turn to be mystified. As he viewed it, the story was right there in the wide-open book of the range for any one to read. That is, any one who was not a fool, and certainly Lonnigan was not that.

Twenty feet distant was a fresh-killed two-year-old steer, and adjacent to it was Lowden's team and wagon. And yet, Lonnigan and Patsy were pretending to be innocent of what was going on before their eyes. Jeff Lowden opened his mouth for a sharp retort, when he observed a swift change of expression come over Lonnigan's face. It was quite evident, even before he admitted it, that he understood.

"I see now," he said simply. "The steer doesn't belong to you."

"It's mine, all right," said Lowden. "Maybe it wasn't mine half an hour ago, but now it is. Listen here, Lonnigan. I ain't as sorry as you might think, that you happened to drop down on me an' Jack like you did. I figure that so long as you're livin' here amongst us, you got to know this some time, so it might's well be now as later on. You're the only man in twenty miles of here that eats his own critters; the rest of us *sell* our own stuff, an'

for our use we snaffle onto what the Four C outfit runs on this range. They're rich, an' don't miss 'em."

Lowden paused, and studied his neighbor intently, until quite certain that he had been thoroughly understood. "An' now," he concluded, a disagreeable note of challenge in his voice, "what're you goin' to do about it, Lonnigan?"

"Why," Lonnigan replied contemptuously, "I'm going to keep right on providing for my family—from what I produce on my own ranch."

"You know what I mean!" Jeff Lowden snapped out the words in a passion. "I mean are you goin' to inform on me?"

Patsy, who had been sitting stiffly beside her father, could contain herself no longer. Her disposition might well be likened to a Montana June day; ordinarily, sunshine may be expected, but —be prepared for a storm. Her dark blue eyes flashed defiance, as she spoke in a fury; but, strangely, her words were addressed to Jack Lowden instead of his father.

"Some one *should* inform on you," she said scornfully, "and we'll do just as we please!"

Jack Lowden flushed under the lash of the girl's tongue. Patsy and he had been great friends.

"No one wants anything to do with a common thief," she concluded, still looking intently at Jack; then, turning her back, she settled herself in her seat. "Let's drive on, father; we're already late for supper."

Dan Lonnigan was evidently of a mind with Patsy, for his lines slackened at her suggestion, and the restive team, suddenly given their heads, tore off down the rough road at a burst of speed that threatened to demolish the ancient buckboard. Neither of them looked back. Had they done so, they would have seen a strange thing. Jack Lowden had seized his father's wrist, and the struggle for possession of a six-shooter which ensued lasted until the buckboard rattled well out of range.

Before a week passed, Lonnigan's attitude toward cattle rustling was known to all his neighbors. Jeff Lowden, who passed the word, never failed to give his opinion that sooner or later Lonnigan would inform the authorities; or, as he expressed it, "spill everything he knew, an' a lot he'd guessed at."

Yet the winter passed uneventfully. Dan Lonnigan kept closely to his ranch, and it was seldom that he met any of his neighbors. When he did, he was greeted sullenly, or not at all. But when spring came, and still no visits from the sheriff, Lonnigan's neighbors began to take heart, and once more evinced a friendly interest in his welfare. Even Jeff Lowden came to believe that he had possibly misjudged his neighbor.

Spring came early that year. The foreman of the Colby's Crossing Cattle Company, who, with three of his riders, stopped one day at the Lonnigan ranch, pronounced it the earliest spring that Montana had seen in twenty years. But although the foreman of the Four C outfit started the conversation with a rambling discourse on the weather, it was soon clear to Dan Lonnigan that the cattleman was holding something back; it was obvious that he had not come to gossip about an early spring. Also, there was an air of expectancy about his three men. Lonnigan noticed that they were relaxed in the saddle, lazily rolling or smoking cigarettes as if they had not a care in the world; yet he sensed a certain eagerness that lurked back of their leisurely manner. Presently their foreman, Parley Bowen, came to the point.

"Lonnigan," he said, speaking slowly and distinctly. "I'm pretty sure you've lived here long enough to know that your neighbors butcher a little of the company's stuff whenever they feel like it. Now, the Four C is a rich outfit, an' for ten years we've overlooked

this little custom of the boys, but now it's come to a show-down."

The foreman paused. Lonnigan, with white lips and flashing eyes, spoke indignantly.

"I don't see why you're telling *me* this," he said quietly. "*I* haven't butchered anything not my own."

Bowen grinned. "If I'd thought you was that kind, Lonnigan, we wouldn't be here. Don't think I'm accusin' you of doin' anything wrong, for I'm not. Just wanted you to know what's goin' on, so's you can kinda protect yourself in the clinches. As I started to say, we've always overlooked the loss of a steer or two, but the boys are goin' too strong now. Week ago, somebody helped 'emselves to over fifty head. Now we're makin' a clean-up. You're goin' to lose a few neighbors in a day or two. Maybe there'll be trouble; maybe not. Sheriff's got some warrants to serve, an'—knowin' the sheriff—I reckon he'll get his men. I hope he gets 'em without anything serious happenin'. But I dunno; it's doubtful."

"I've always stood up for the law," Lonnigan said, looking thoughtfully toward his little ranch house. Patsy and her mother stood in the doorway, frankly curious. "If you need me—I mean if the sheriff's short of men, why I'm with him, of course."

Bowen reached down and seized Lonnigan's hand. "Thanks," he said impulsively. "I knew you was with us, but I'm mighty glad to hear you say so. But at that, we didn't come here to try an' get you into trouble; we want to keep you out of it. If there's any fightin', the sheriff's bunch, along with the boys from the Four C can take care of 'em, I think. No, we don't want you to help do any fightin'. What I come here for, was to warn you folks to stick pretty close to your ranch for the next few days till the trouble's all over. There's been a lot of talk goin' on that you might tell some things you know, so when the sheriff comes, somebody more'n likely be ready to take a pot shot at you, thinkin', of course, that you was the one that started the ball to rollin'. An' now, so long. We got a lot of ridin' to do."

Followed by his men, Parley Bowen rode off down the lane toward the county road, and Patsy ran to meet Lonnigan as he thoughtfully took his way to the ranch house.

"What did they want, father?" asked Patsy, who had sensed something out of the usual. "Is there anything wrong?"

"Nothing wrong," said Lonnigan gravely, "though there may be a few things go wrong before matters around here are set right."

He turned and watched the bobbing figures of Bowen and his companions, as they wheeled their mounts from the lane into the county road.

"They just told me," he went on, "that our neighbors are even worse than we thought. Bowen says that his company lost more than fifty head a week ago. Now they're planning to make some arrests around here." Lonnigan looked sharply at Patsy. "Jeff Lowden and his boy are likely among those wanted."

If Patsy was moved by this last item of information, she disguised the fact admirably. "Why do they tell us?" she asked. "Why do they think we're interested in the arrest of cattle thieves?"

"We *are* interested, Patsy. After all, they're our neighbors, and they've been good to us—before we ran into the Lowdens last fall and discovered——"

"That our nearest neighbors were common thieves!" Patsy interrupted. "I don't see why you stand up for them."

"I don't. I'm sorry for them, that's all. I'm sorry because they've got the wrong slant on life."

Lonnigan pointed to a hundred acres of winter wheat that billowed in the

sunshine, a sea of green, securely kept in bounds by its shore line of new wire fence.

"Their mistake," he said, "is in not coming to this. In some parts of Montana they've tried to farm land that's fit for range land only; around here, they've been running stock on land that should all be in wheat. At heart these people are not bad; it's just that they got off wrong."

"But why," Patsy repeated, "did they come to tell *us* about the arrests they intend to make?"

"Oh, Bowen thought I'd like to know about my neighbors; he was riding near here anyway. I offered to help, but he says I won't be needed."

With parted lips, Patsy, who was on the point of asking another question, stared down the lane in the direction taken by Bowen and his men. The four flying horsemen were returning as rapidly as they had left. At the gate, Bowen dismounted and rushed toward Lonnigan.

"Just found out something," he said hurriedly, "an' had to come back to tell you. Passing your north pasture, over the hill there, we saw where your horses were drove off. Like I was tellin' you, it looks like they've heard the sheriff was after 'em, an' thinkin' you was the one that informed on 'em, they've run your horses off."

"They're *my* horses," said Patsy angrily. "That's what you get father," she went on, looking up at Lonnigan with blazing eyes, "for extending sympathy to our *neighbors*. You should have had them arrested long ago!"

"No matter whose horses they are," Bowen broke in quickly, "they're gone, ev'ry hoof. Fer was cut at the mouth of that little draw, an' they drove 'em off toward Flat-top Mountain. Tracks lead that way, anyhow. But never mind the horses right now; time enough to look after 'em later. I come back to tell you that might be a good notion for all you folks to get ready an' come over to our place an' stay there till this little fuss is all settled. They've started by runnin' off your stock; can't tell what they'll do to you next."

"Thanks," said Lonnigan, "but I've got to stay here. There's the chickens, a few sheep, and other stuff to look after. Besides, it's my home, and I don't feel like running away. But so long as you think there's danger in staying on here, I expect it'll be a good plan for Patsy and her mother——"

"To stay right here with you!" interrupted Patsy. "You won't find us running away from a few common thieves. A thief is always a coward."

"These men are not cowards, none of 'em," said Bowen gravely. "When they're worked up, they'll shoot, an' shoot to kill. What makes it bad, is that they've got the wrong idee about your dad, miss. I was in hopes they wouldn't get wind of the sheriff's raid till it was over, but it looks like they have. Don't think they'd have run off your stock last night, if they hadn't. Sorry you don't see things my way, but I'll tell the sheriff about you stayin' on here, an' we'll do our best. We'll have altogether around fifty men, an' we may need ev'ry one of 'em before this thing's over. I'll tell the sheriff, and he'll do what he can to get your horses, soon's he gets time."

Patsy looked after Bowen and his men, once more in full gallop down the lane. "And Mr. Bowen thinks," she said speculatively, "that some of these cattle and horse thieves would dare attack us." As if such a thing were impossible, she laughed; then thoughtfully sobered. "And now, what's to be done about those horses?"

"Nothing," said Lonnigan decisively. "At least, we'll do nothing until after the sheriff has made his arrests. We'll talk it over after supper, if you like, but I don't see that there's anything we *can* do."

While Patsy helped her mother clear the supper table, Lonnigan sat thoughtfully by the kitchen stove, smoking. He was inclined to accept Patsy's view of the matter, and to disregard Bowen's friendly warning of impending danger; yet a vague apprehension told him that there was cause for alarm. He recalled the sullen glances of his neighbors, glances that might so easily be interpreted as unspoken threats. And Bowen had plainly said that they were desperate men. "When they're worked up," he had said, "they'll shoot, an' shoot to kill."

Lonnigan shot a grim glance at his two rifles hanging on their pegs in the kitchen wall. Just as he had dismissed the matter from his mind with a shrug for the ideas that he had convinced himself were absurd, the door flew open, and a man leaped into the lighted kitchen. Lonnigan sprang to his feet. Dumb with amazement, he stared at the man who had hurriedly barred the door after him and now turned to face the surprised Lonnigan and the startled women. It was Jack Lowden.

"They'll be here in a minute," said the boy. He was speaking rapidly, yet his voice was calm. "I rode on ahead; they're not much over a quarter mile behind me. Fix your front door an' the windows—quick!"

There was something compelling in the manner of Jack Lowden. Patsy was never to forget him, as he stood there that night, his head thrown back, his clean-cut, handsome face sharply defined in the bright lamplight. In the excitement of the moment, every detail of the picture before her eyes stood out with the distinctness of a cameo set in a background of unburnished gold.

Her father stood irresolute in the center of the room, incapable momentarily of obeying the staccato barkings of young Lowden, and suddenly Patsy realized and flew to bar the door in the front room. As she worked, she heard vaguely the sharp lash of Lowden's words as they stung her father into action.

"Man! Don't you get it—yet! They're comin' to—kill you! Your rifle—get both of them down—window—in front. Quick!"

Patsy stumbled back toward the kitchen, suddenly plunged in darkness. Lowden brushed past her and whispered coolly, reassuringly, as he went. Hesitantly she stood between the two rooms. She heard the faint rumbling of galloping horses, a shout in the distance; then her father, now at the kitchen window, was speaking softly to her mother. A moment later came the crash of the front window, followed almost instantly by the resounding report of Lowden's rifle.

"Down!" he called as he fired. Instantly came a dozen or more distant cracks of rifles and the dull drum of lead against the log walls, prompt replies to his opening shot. From the kitchen came the crash of a shattered window. "Keep down on the floor," Lowden threw over his shoulder to Patsy.

The low voices of her father and mother came reassuringly from the kitchen, and she obeyed. Crouched on the floor, she could see her father and Lowden as they moved about in the dim light that filtered through the two windows. More shots were exchanged.

"Don't shoot to hit," Lowden called to Lonnigan in the kitchen. "So long as it keeps as light as it is, they won't come any closer. Of course, if they do——"

Lowden broke off his speech to Lonnigan and for some time peered through the window. "They're nearly out of range," he said softly to Patsy, "an' I'm mighty glad of it. Sheriff's already got two. They tried to take the Branscomb boys into camp—claim they wanted 'em for rustlin' fifty head of Four C stuff—

an' they say Jim Branscomb'll maybe die. Sev'ral others hit, but not serious. So that's why this crowd's out there now. I couldn't let your folks be shot down; I had to come to warn you and to protect you," he continued, looking at Patsy. "Hope we can keep from hurtin' anybody. Dad's among 'em, you see."

"Why does he—they—want to—kill father?" Patsy asked tremulously.

"They figure he deserves it, I reckon. He's supposed to have informed the sheriff

"He ... not! But if he had, he would have been justified!"

"Maybe. It all depends on how you look at it. Rustlin'—if you call it that—it's been goin' on for years, an' up till now, nobody's raised a row about it."

"It isn't serious to steal fifty head of cattle," said Patsy scornfully. "I don't suppose you call that rustling."

"That's different again. That's the real thing. I'm not ready to say the Branscomb boys are the ones, but I do know that none of *my* friends ever rustled wholesale like that."

"I'd have more respect for you, if you did," Patsy retorted hotly. "If there's a choice between them, I certainly think less of this petty stealing."

"I knew you folks didn't understand," Lowden went on without the least show of emotion. "It's not stealin'—the way we figure it—though I reckon the law won't agree with us. About ten years ago, we had some argument with the Four C people about the range hereabouts. We figure we got the worst of the deal, so we served notice on 'em that so long as they let their stock feed on our range, we'd feed on their stock. I think they've been satisfied till right lately. It's the law, not the Four C outfit."

"How about my horses?" Patsy asked sharply. "They were stolen last night, and *we* haven't had any trouble about range."

There was no reply from Lowden. He was peering intently through the window. Patsy heard again the beat of galloping horses, and nerved herself for another attack. They were rapidly approaching now. There were rifle shots, shrill cries; the distant beat of flying horses had suddenly grown to the rumble of thunder. Lowden drew back from the window and called out to Lonnigan.

"Don't shoot," he shouted. "They're goin' by—that the sheriff's bunch right back of 'em!"

As the horsemen swept by, they raked the cabin with a farewell volley. Exultant, Patsy rose from the floor and sprang to the window. The danger was now over. The sound of the riders who had just passed, came in a faint tattoo, while the drum of those approaching now rumbled in her ears, hesitated in front of the cabin, then clattered on again. An instant later there was an insistent pounding on the door, then the voice of Bowen.

"You all right in there?"

"We're all right." It was Lonnigan, calling from the kitchen. "No one touched, I guess."

"Fine! We've got the ones that helped 'emselves to our fifty head last week—the Branscomb boys—and now we're after the lad that rustled your horses. Three of my boys saw him; it's your neighbor, young Jack Lowden."

Patsy, standing at Jack Lowden's elbow, stiffened at Bowen's words. Then, almost in her ear, there was a short, ironic laugh, which terminated in an agonized groan. She felt the weight of Lowden leaning against her heavily. Dimly she heard Bowen saying that he "must be gettin' on." Then came a long sigh from young Lowden as he slumped to her feet on the floor.

Drydust basked in the spring sunshine. Sheriff Jud Adams, in company with Parley Bowen, rode leisurely into

the little village late in the afternoon following their hard ride of the night before. That morning they had snatched a few hours of sleep, but their drawn faces still showed the effects of the strain under which they had labored. The sheriff wore a tired but contented smile, for he was well satisfied at the final outcome of his clash with the rustlers.

"It isn't likely that you folks will have any further trouble, Parley," he said with much satisfaction. "Just as soon as I pick up this Lowden boy, my work is over. He won't resist—wounded as he is—do you think?"

"Resist!" Parley Bowen exclaimed. "I should say not! Why, I've got a hunch he'd run to meet you—if he had the least notion you wanted him." The old cattleman shook his head dolefully.

"Wish you could see your way clear, Jud, to let that kid off this time. I tell you his case ain't like the Branscombs. They were the real thing—rustlers, I mean—but outside the Branscombs, the rest of that crowd really means all right. Besides, now that the comp'ny's agreed to give up them five sections they've had all this fuss over, there ain't a chance for any more trouble. Let him go, sheriff, an' it'll make for better feelin' ev'ry way. Lonnigan an' his wife're both willin' enough."

"They're willing enough, as you say, but the horses belong to Patsy. They admit it. And Patsy, you know, has always been dead set against rustling. She's even opposed to the petty stuff that your company has ignored for nearly ten years." Jud Adams drew rein at one side of the straggling street. He was evidently not averse to arguing the matter further, and Bowen brightened.

"Maybe she's changed now," he suggested hopefully. "She brought young Lowden in to the doctor this mornin'. A year ago, you know, her an' Jack Lowden was pretty thick."

Jud Adams shook his head with sudden decision. "I'm sorry, Parley," he said, "but it can't be done. Even if Patsy *has* changed her mind, I still have my duty to perform, and the proof is positive that the boy stole her horses. No, I'll have to take him in."

"Then," said Parley Bowen dejectedly, "you'd best start right in, for here he comes."

It was true. From the O. K. hitch barn, distant less than a hundred yards, a buckboard had dashed forth, and was now coming toward them. Patsy was driving, and at her side was Jack Lowden, his right arm draped across his chest, looming up conspicuously in its great bandage of white.

"Don't look like you'd have much trouble takin' him, Jud," Parley Bowen growled with intense sarcasm. "If he *should* resist though, just you call on me, an I'll lend you a hand."

With a tolerant grin at his old friend's remark, the sheriff spurred his mount to the middle of the street, held up his hand, and the buckboard came obediently to a stop. Patsy's blue eyes flashed defiance.

"It's late," she said without waiting for the sheriff to speak, "and we have a long drive before us. Will you please let me pass?"

"I'll let *you* pass, Miss Patsy," said Adams a trifle gruffly, "but I'm afraid I'll have to take the young man with you into the county seat. I think both of you know why."

"Look here, Mr. Adams," Patsy began indignantly, "I know all about those horses, and it's absurd for you to think for a minute that he ever intended to—to steal them. He only——"

"Save you breath, miss," interrupted the sheriff good-naturedly, "for I've already heard his excuse—or what he gave your folks for an excuse. They—and you too, it seems—have been well taken in." He paused, and gave Jack Lowden a shrewd, searching survey.

"Young man," he resumed, "that yarn you told Patsy's folks is too thin. You'll have a mighty hard time making a jury believe that you thought those horses belonged to Lonnigan, and only took them to teach him the lesson of minding his own business. Of course," Jud Adams went on, his voice quietly sarcastic, "you intended to bring the horses back in a day or two, or as soon as you figured Lonnigan had learned that you fellows meant business. Son, the story's too thin, so crawl out of there and come along with me."

"Sit where you are," said Patsy to Lowden, openly defying the sheriff. "Suppose," she said, addressing Jud Adams, "that Jack took those horses knowing that it was perfectly all right with me; and suppose further, that I should go before a jury and tell them it was all right with me. Would they convict?"

The question puzzled the sheriff for a moment. "Why," he replied, "I don't suppose a jury would convict if you could bring yourself to tell them a thing like that. In fact, I *know* they wouldn't. But could you swear to a thing like that, Patsy?"

"I certainly could, and if it's necessary, I will."

"But how can you? The horses, Jack says, he left in that pasture on the section adjoining his dad's place. How can you swear that you wanted him to leave them there?"

Patsy smiled sweetly at the sheriff. "Because," she said, "Jack intends to do a great deal of spring plowing, just as soon as he can get to it. I want him to do the plowing with those horses."

"Spring plowing!" gasped the astonished sheriff. "Whoever heard of the Lowdens, father or son, doing spring or any other kind of plowing!"

"You'll hear of it very soon," said Patsy positively. "At least you'll hear of the *son* doing some plowing." From a small satchel at her feet, Patsy produced a folded paper, which she demurely handed to the sheriff. "Here is some evidence which I'm sure you'll insist on seeing," she continued. "That is, you'll want to see it before you allow us to pass, I suppose. It happens to be my certificate of marriage, and—now do you believe that Jack intends to do some spring plowing?"

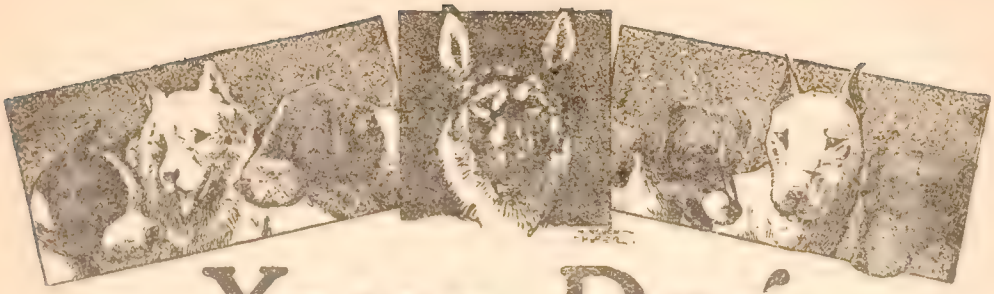
The astonished sheriff gave the paper a brief examination and passed it hurriedly back to Patsy; then he touched his horse with a spurred heel, for Patsy had confidently gathered up her lines.

"Yes, Mrs. Lowden," he said, as he removed his huge hat with a grandiloquent bow, "I'm *sure* Jack's going to do some spring plowing."

"Take him along, Miss Patsy!" shouted Parley Bowen enthusiastically. "The law don't want anything but bad rustlers! Put him to plowin', an' I'm bettin' all I got that he makes a *good* rustler for you!"

SEEKS UNDERGROUND RANCH

A LITTLE while ago, the chamber of commerce at Sacramento, California, received a letter of inquiry from a man in the East, asking assistance in finding a suitable property for an underground ranch. He stated his intention of migrating to California at once if a suitable site for his subterranean ranch could be revealed. Abandoned mine drifts or tunnels, he thought would be suitable. The mining department of the chamber of commerce replied by suggesting several abandoned mines in the vicinity of Folsom and in El Dorado and Amador Counties. The Easterner is a mushroom grower by occupation and wanted to cultivate a crop of that delicacy, hence his quest for the underground ranch.



Your Dog

By David Post

Author of "The Sealyham Terrier," etc.

THE YORKSHIRE TERRIER

THE Yorkshire terrier, which has been bred for for more than sixty years, differs very much from its sturdy working-terrier cousins. It resembles the Skye terrier in general build, and is, perhaps, more closely related to that breed than to other terriers. Black and tan at birth, the Yorkshire's color begins to change when it is a few months old; the body hair develops a bluish tinge while that on the head becomes a golden tan.

Frankly a toy dog, the Yorkshire is one to be handled with the utmost care, so that its elegant coat may not be marred. It must be brushed and combed every day; special stockings are often provided for its feet, so that it may not injure its long, silky hair with its nails. Its diet must be regulated carefully, and various cosmetics must be applied at times to keep its coat in condition.

While the Yorkshire is an intelligent little dog, it is not a useful one, and it requires so much attention that I can recommend it only to those who are willing to devote a large amount of time to maintaining its elegant appearance. At dog shows, however, the Yorkshires attract attention because of the beauty of their coats and the oddness of their markings.

The following is the standard for this breed:

General Appearance—Should be that of a long-coated toy terrier. The coat should hang quite straight and evenly down each side; it should have a parting that extends from the nose to the end of the tail. The Yorkshire terrier should be very neat and compact; it should carry itself very upright and with an important air, and it should look as though it had a strong and well-proportioned body.

Head—Rather small and flat—the skull should not be too prominent or round—and not too long in the muzzle. The nose should be black. The hair on the head should be long and of a rich golden tan; about the ear roots at the sides of the head, it should be deeper in color. The muzzle, too, should have a darker tan and the hair there should be very long. On the chest the hair should be a rich, bright tan. The tan of the head must not extend on to the neck, and there must not be any sooty or dark hair intermingled with the tan.

Eyes—Of medium size, they should be dark and sparkling, with a sharp, intelligent expression. Placed so that they look straight forward, they should not be prominent. The edge of the eyelids should be of a dark color.

Ears—Small, V-shaped, and carried

erect or semierect, they should be covered with short hair of a very deep, rich tan.

Mouth—The jaws should be perfectly even, and the teeth as sound as possible.

Body—Very compact. The loin should be strong and the back straight.

Coat—The hair on the body should be long, straight, glossy, and of a fine, silky texture. The color should be a dark steel blue; this should be the color from the back of the skull to the root of the tail; it is importat that no fawn, bronze, or dark hairs should be mingled with the blue.

Legs—Straight, and well covered with hair of a rich, golden tan, which should be lighter at the ends than at the roots. This color should not extend above the elbows of the forelegs, nor above the stifles of the hind legs.

Feet—Should be as round as possible. The toe nails should be black.

Tail—Cut to medium length, it should be well supplied with hair of a darker blue than the rest of the body, especially at the end of the tail. The tail should be carried a little higher than the level of the back.

Tan—All tan hair should be darker at the roots than in the middle, while the middle should be somewhat darker than the tips.

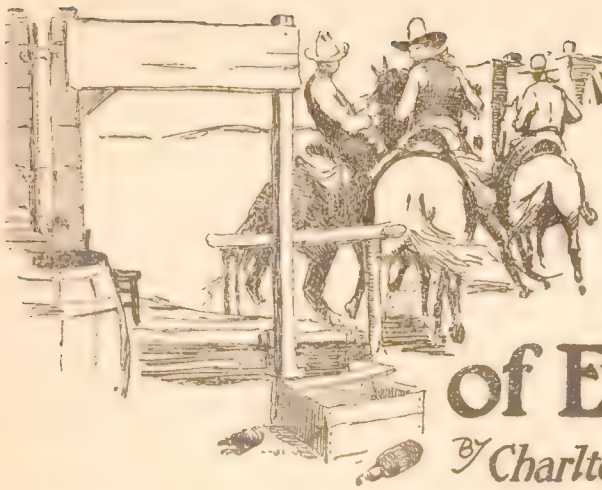
Weight—Yorkshire terriers are divided into three classes according to weight: those of five pounds or less; those weighing more than five pounds, but not more than seven; and those over seven pounds.

In next week's issue I will tell you about a comparatively new breed, the Kerry blue terrier.

REDWOOD HIGHWAY BEING EXTENDED NORTHWARD

THE work of completing California's beautiful Redwood Highway is continually being pushed, and eventually this road will take its place as the most attractive in the State for motor sightseers. The Redwood Highway commences at Sausalito, on San Francisco Bay, and runs northward through San Rafael, Cloverdale, Ukiah, Eureka, Trinidad, and other towns, to Crescent City. For mile after mile, this road leads through the great redwood forests, carpeted with ferns, the sunlight percolating through in golden shafts. Frequently the highway escapes from the embrace of the big timber and skirts high headlands where the mighty Pacific pounds itself into white foam on the rocks below. Beyond Eureka, the road passes through the wildest, most primitive part of the California coast country. Pushing north to Trinidad, the motorist will find one of the last great whaling stations on the American continent. Then he can proceed to Requa, where he will have to ferry the estuary of the Klamath River, though this will no longer be necessary when the Douglas Memorial Bridge now under construction is completed. From this point the road runs up the coast to Crescent City.

Leaving Crescent City, the route over the 3,090-foot pass to Grants Pass may be taken, or one may drive through the Oregon lumbering sections to Brookings, Gold Beach, Port Oxford, and Marshfield. The work of widening, straightening, and surfacing the highway is constantly in progress, and it is expected that two more years will see a completed road north of Eureka to Crescent City and Grants Pass. In five years, it is hoped that a superb highway will extend from San Francisco Bay to the Columbia River.



"Skew-gee" Dave — He Thinks of Everything!

By Charlton Lawrence Edholm

THE adobe town of Mesquite was drowsy after the heat of an Arizona day. The swollen red sun was setting behind the peaks of Sawtooth Range. The clouds above it were ruddy.

It was getting late. "Skew-gee" Dave Collins had just finished lighting the kerosene lamp in his general store, the big evil-smelling vessel that hung before the safe.

He looked up, then glanced at his gun beneath the counter as three men stamped in with jingling spurs and the hilarious noises of cow-punchers in town.

They stopped before the wicket at one end of the counter, where the words "Post Office" were painted with a marking brush.

They were all strangers in those parts.

One of them was a sallow-faced "bad hombre" with a nose like a vulture's beak over his thin, shaven lips. He slid a package upon the counter and remarked: "Hey, old scout, if you're the postmaster, I'm bringing you business."

"I reckon you're jist in time," said Skew-gee Dave. "Store's open for a couple of hours yet, but the post office end of it, I gener'ly closes after the stage leaves for Ocotilla Junction. What kin I do fer you?"

"Here's a package I want you to register, old hoss." The stranger shoved the heavy, square package in stout paper across the boards.

"What's in it?" asked Skew-gee Dave, noticing the Chicago address as he weighed the box.

"Jewelry, m'son!" broke in the second man, a squat, red-headed chap, who was fanning his heated face with his sombrero. "We done cleaned up a bunch of tinhorns in Ocotilla. They reckoned they understood poker, but when we got through we had their watches and rings and the headlights from their neckties. We could have had their shirts if we'd wanted them."

The third man, who was thin and red-faced as if his features had been scoured with sand, barked out: "Make it snappy! We wanta get outa here pronto. It's supper time!"

"So you got all the rocks away from the tinhorns—and the *dinero,* likewise! That's sure a good job," commented Skew-gee Dave as he made out the registration slip. "You must have took nigh a bucketful of watches and sparklers by the size of this here package."

"Yeah! We trimmed 'em plenty. We're sending the stuff to a pawnshop

in Chi. The little guy that runs it will cash it for us."

As Skew-gee Dave sealed the parcel with hot sealing wax, the red-headed stranger laughed. "Ef you dropped that wax where you're lookin', you'd burn both hands off." For Skew-gee Dave had got his name from the fact that his two eyes looked six ways at once. He was so cross-eyed that old Doc Jennings used to say he could see around the corner better than straight ahead.

Skew-gee Dave was good-natured, but any remark about his eyes made him irritable.

"I reckon you're strangers round here?" he questioned.

"Yep. Here to-day and gone to-morrow," answered the red-headed man who was known as Steve. "We aim to tuck away some ham and eggs under our belts and push out right after supper. Come along, Jesse."

The lanky, thin-featured puncher to whom he had spoken, paused long enough to remark: "I reckon you'd better take good care of that package of jewelry, mister. Some of these tough birds around here may stage a holdup."

"Nobody is goin' to tackle me, young feller," replied Skew-gee Dave emphatically. "Nobody that has ever seen me pull a gun, that is."

This was true. Skew-gee Dave's speed with a six-gun made him respected out there even among the hard-boiled citizens whose quickness on the trigger was their best life preserver.

"Oh, I reckon the stuff's safe enough while you're watching it," replied Steve. "But after you lock up and go home for the night, what's to prevent somebody from just naturally burstin' into the store and walkin' off with it? Better get it into the safe."

"Get out of here you lop-eared jack rabbit," shouted Skew-gee in sudden fury. "Do you aim to walk in on the United States postmaster and tell him how to run his business? That there package is now under the protection of Uncle Sam, and don't you forget it! Make tracks, pronto! And don't stop until you're outside of the door."

The big man with the nose like a vulture's beak tightened his thin lips in fury, but thought better of it as he saw that Skew-gee's right hand was under the counter. He guessed that it was gripping the butt of a .45. So he contented himself with a black look full of malice, and a muffled oath.

"Come on, Joe!" cried the other two who were already outside the door. Then added derisively: "Don't aggrivate that there cock-eyed bob cat. If he starts shootin' at yuh, he's likely to bust a lamp chimney—or maybe that ham that's hangin' on the beam."

With a chorus of jeering guffaws the three hard customers swung onto their ponies and rode in the direction of the hotel, a frame shack at the other end of the sandy street.

Smarting with the sting of their insults, Skew-gee snatched up his colt and dashed for the door, but by the time he had reached it, the blaze of temper had died down, and he contented himself by looking after the riders, who were half obscured in the dust kicked up by their bronchos.

"Low-down ornery polecats!" he muttered. "'Tain't worth my while wasting ca'tridges on cockroaches like them. What's more, Dave me boy, you don't want never to forget that you're a government institution. As postmaster of Mesquite you represent the United States of America, the greatest nation on God's green footstool. As deputy sheriff you stand for the peace and dignity of Cochise County, State of Arizony—the noblest of the forty-eight, God bless her!"

Having consoled his dignity with these reflections, Skew-gee returned to the store, picked up the package, and examined it thoughtfully under the light of the kerosene lamp.

"Sufferin' mavericks! That's sure a hefty haul!" he remarked. "I wonder now," he continued to himself, "if those tough birds got the loot off the tinhorns in Ocotilla like they said. By their looks I might say they'd held up a train or somethin'. Let's see if we can get a line on them."

Skew-gee turned to a big filing cabinet, bought secondhand in Tucson, and pulled out a sheaf of folders. He was scanning the papers when Doc Jennings, general practitioner of that section, dismounted and strolled in to buy a cigar.

"'Lo, Dave?" commented the doctor. "What branch of science are you studying now?" For it was a standing joke between Doc and Dave that the storekeeper and postmaster was a student of all kinds of subjects in which the average country-store keeper is not interested.

"I'm just lookin' over my rogue's gallery," answered Skew-gee, displaying some of the sheets that announced a reward for the capture of bad men all over the country. Dave had made it a point to secure a lot of them that would not ordinarily come to a deputy sheriff. Also, he had a splendid collection of finger prints. He collected them as a small boy collects postage stamps.

"I don't see as there is a reward for any of those three birds, that I just run out of here," commented Skew-gee. "Maybe I can get the goods on them by their finger prints."

Doctor Jennings set down his instrument case and looked on with amusement while Skew-gee dug out his finger-print developing apparatus from a drawer and began operations on the package in front of him.

But the paper was very rough, the impressions were too blurry to do him any good, and Skew-gee put away his magnifying glass and gave it up in disgust, while the doctor lit his stogy and smiled indulgently.

"What you grinnin' at, you pill-mixin', bootleggin' sawbones!" snapped Skew-gee. "You may be a man of science as you claim you are, but I've got a hunch that them birds was bad hombres. And it's my experience that lots of times a hunch is worth more than a college eddication."

"What's in the package, Dave?" asked the doctor, ignoring the good-natured abuse.

"Diamond stick pins and gold watches. Anyhow, that's what these birds said it was when they registered it."

Dave shoved the package across the counter to Doctor Jennings, and added: "Heft it, Doc! Have you heard of any holdups around here lately?"

"No. Why?"

"I was just thinkin' I had better keep this package a few days in case I hear of a train robbery."

But the doctor's attention had been caught by something suspicious about the package. "That's funny!" he said. "Hear that ticking sound?"

Dave put his ear to it. "Now that you mention it, Doc, I sure do. I reckon it's one of them watches."

But the doctor pulled open his instrument case and produced a stethoscope. He attached the ear pieces to his head and placed the instrument against the parcel, listening with an attentive expression.

"What you aimin' to do, Doc? Give it a powder if its temperature is too high?" asked Skew-gee sarcastically.

But the doctor detached the instrument and backed away from the parcel with speed.

"That's no watch!" he announced curtly. "That's a small alarm clock."

"An alarm clock! What you givin' us!"

"If you'll take my advice," exclaimed the doctor, backing out of the door, you'll keep a long ways from that package. I'll bet you ten dollars it's an infernal machine with an alarm clock timed to explode it."

The doctor had snatched his instrument case and made a dive for his horse.

Dave was left alone with the mysterious parcel.

He edged away from it cautiously and remarked: "This is one time where a college eddication is as good as a hunch." He hesitated a few moments, taking shelter behind the safe as he wondered what to do next.

Then, with a courage that often ran to recklessness, the mild-mannered storekeeper picked up the parcel, ran out the back door, and into the patch of mesquite trees that fringed the settlement.

Under one of these tough and gnarly trees was a cavity that he had made with the intention of digging out the tree for firewood, for mesquite roots are the principal fuel in that section.

Dave placed the parcel carefully in the cavity, shoveled dirt on top of it, and slipped back to the store in the darkness.

He found that while he had been absent, another acquaintance had drifted in. It was Harry Driscol, manager of the Flying Circle Ranch.

"Look here, Skew-gee," he began abruptly. "I'm pulling out for Bisbee to-morrow and I'm carrying ten thousand dollars of the old man's money in my clothes. Let me stick it in your safe to-night, for I don't like to sleep with that much *dinero* under my pillow."

Skew-gee looked at his friend with a queer expression. "I wonder," he said, "if anybody had a hunch that you was aimin' to leave that much money in my safe?"

"That's a funny question, Dave! Why do you ask?"

"Well, it's this way. I never have more than a thousand or two in that old box, but on the very night you want me to take care of ten thousand dollars, I got a hunch that a gang of crooks is aimin' to loot it."

Skew-gee described the three strangers and told Harry Driscol about the mysterious package.

"Come to think of it," answered Driscol, "I did see some hard-lookin' birds around my ranch house yesterday. They braced the foreman for a job, but he is lettin' off men now instead of takin' 'em on, so they didn't stay. Maybe one of the punchers who got his time gave them a tip about this ten thousand—more . think of it, the more I believe it's so, for I'd told the foreman, and he's a regular old granny when it comes to gossip."

For half an hour Skew-gee Dave talked over the situation in undertones while one or two customers came and went; then Driscol handed the storekeeper a flat package that looked like currency, which the latter thrust into his safe, spinning the knob. Then he locked up the store, leaving the lamp turned down to a tiny blue flame.

Skew-gee Dave and Driscol went to the hotel for supper and noticed that the strange riders were still busy with their coffee at a table in the dining room.

. "Keep an eye on those birds," whispered Dave. "I'll be back in a little while. Order a steak and mashed potatoes for me."

Then he hastened back in the darkness to the store, rummaged in the back room, and brought out a galvanized tin bucket, which he placed in front of the safe.

He then searched among his Fourth-of-July stuff until he found the biggest firecracker in captiviity. It was fully ten inches long, a regular humdinger. This he placed under the bucket and laid a trail of black powder from the fuse of the cannon cracker to the trapdoor leading to the cellar.

He departed by the outside cellar door, which he left unlocked, and then made a bee line for the hotel, where he arrived just as the landlady was bringing in his steak.

Skew-gee noticed that the strangers

glanced occasionally at him and Driscol, but he pretended to pay no attention to them, and when he had finished his hard-boiled coffee and dried peach pie, he announced in a loud voice:

"Well, I'm all done up! I'm goin' to hit the hay!"

"Same here!" said Driscol.

The strangers exchanged significant glances as the two left for their bedrooms.

But ten minutes later Driscol and Skew-gee Dave were slipping through the mesquite brush toward the cellar door of the general store. Dave was saying in a whisper: "I've got a hunch that these guys timed that thing for about twelve thirty. The reason I think so is that there's a freight pulls out of Ocotilla Junction at one thirty, and they could just about make it, if they give their ponies the quirt."

Dave took his position in the cellar with a box of matches. Driscol found a hiding place in the brush where he could see the back door of the store.

Time passed slowly. The settlement was fast asleep, and only a few card players in Mexican Joe's were out of bed when a startling explosion shook the town at twelve twenty-five.

On top of that, things moved fast. Three figures dashed swiftly from the shadows and smashed the back door of Dave's establishment with a single blow of an ax.

The next instant they were in front of the big safe, their nostrils filled with the fumes of burned powder. By the rays of a pocket flashlight they stared in amazement at the iron door of the safe standing as immovable as Gibraltar.

"Can you beat it?" snarled Jesse. "That bomb had enough dynamite to blow the box six ways for Sunday. It must be a heap stronger than it looks."

There was no time for a reply. The trapdoor from the cellar had been thrust open, and from it came the wicked-looking nose of a .45 and the barking command: "Stick 'em up, boys!"

Another command issued from the back door behind them. "Put 'em up lively! On your toes now!"

The bandits were covered by the weapons of two first-class gun fighters, Skew-gee Dave and Harry Driscoll, no getting away from that!

Three pairs of hands went up automatically, and while Driscol held the gun on the men, Skew-gee relieved them of their hardware.

"Boys," he said, "that was a neat little dodge, and it might have worked all right if it hadn't been for a hunch and a college eddication. That's a pair that's hard to beat."

He continued with a chuckle. "Keep 'em covered, Harry, while I go and get the bracelets."

Then from under the counter he produced the handcuffs that his prisoners deserved so well.

The three tough birds regarded the mild-mannered, cross-eyed little storekeeper with sullen fury as he turned up the flame of the kerosene lamp.

"Sufferin' sidewinders!" growled the man with the nose like a vulture's beak. "To think of being trapped by a shrimp like that!"

"Shut up!" said Harry Driscol. "Skew-gee is the smartest little runt in Cochise County."

His remark was punctuated by a terrific explosion outside the store. Gravel and chips came pattering down upon the iron roof.

"There goes your infernal machine, boys!" chuckled Driscol. "And unless I miss my guess, it has blown a gnarly old mesquite into prime stove wood all ready for the ax. Skew-gee here reckoned as how it was a shame to waste the bomb. That boy always thinks of everything!"

The Squaw Boy

By

Peter Henry Morland

Author of "Beyond the Outposts," etc.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters

WHILE journeying Westward in a caravan of prairie schooners, Thomas Tucker and his wife lose their lives when there is an attack by the Cheyennes. Their five-year-old son, Granvil, escapes, and he wanders, after a time, into the Cheyenne camp. He is at once claimed by Little Grouse and Rising Bull, who are mourning the loss of their only child. Little Grouse pretends that The White Badger, as the child is called, is a gift from Tirawa, an Indian god. The chief, Red Eagle, himself acclaims the lad a great medicine.

Many years later, although The White Badger is still but a boy, Spotted Ear, who has been cursed with ill luck, begs White Badger to accompany him on a horse-thieving raid.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BADGER TAKES A SCALP.

THE way of Spotted Ear began to be easy at the very moment that the way of White Badger became difficult. For when it was announced through the village that The Badger intended to accompany Spotted Ear on a horse-stealing excursion, there was a fair scramble among the young braves to get themselves admitted among the chosen few. So that Spotted Ear could stand back and choose the best men with the fleetest horses. But when The Badger reached his lodge, the tidings had gone before him and he found Little Grouse in a panic. First she stormed at him and commanded him to stay at home. But The Badger was not one to be commanded by a woman.

He shoved the hilt of his knife into her ribs.

"Fat pig," said The Badger, "there are no bones in you, but there is a throat to be choked. Do not trouble me with your talk. I go with my friends for a little ride over the plains."

Little Grouse fell into a speechless rage. When one of these spasms came upon her, she used to run out and throw herself on the ground and beat her head and tear her hair. Her passion was so terrible because it was impossible for her to relieve herself with words. She dared not tell the world that the boy she had reared was a wicked little ingrate with a tongue like a wolf's tooth. She dared not tell Rising Bull, even!

And now, through the headstrong foolishness of this youngster, he was about to throw himself away and throw away, in the same gesture, all of the care and the labor of head and hand which she had poured forth upon it. Yet she came back to the tepee hurrying. She met Rising Bull on the way, and she told him the story.

"The Badger must learn the ways of men," said her husband. "You cannot in truth keep him like a woman all of his life."

She turned and glared at him. It was a continual curse to her that Rising Bull himself did not know the secret and that she could not pour forth to him all of her cares concerning The Badger. As time went on, she had a more and more important sense of loneliness; even The Badger himself no longer realized that his importance was based upon a sham. He was convinced that he was a rare soul, a rare power in this world. Once he had attributed his significance to the clever wits of his foster mother. But that was long ago. In the course of five long years, he had come to regard himself as a being strange and strong by predestination in certain respects—and strangely weak in others. His task was harder than the task of Little Grouse. She had only to talk about him; but The Badger had to make good the words which she spoke concerning him. So he began to look down on Little Grouse.

When she reached the lodge with her husband, she merely said: "The Pawnees have good horses and bad horses. And we are poor. Bring back ten horses. Make us rich, White Badger!"

"I shall bring you twenty horses," said The Badger.

And he went out to meet the others. They were ready and waiting for him. In half a dozen lodges medicine had been made, and the report of it was good. Spotted Ear had a small pinto for The Badger, and as the latter leaped up into the saddle, Spotted Ear said:

"This is your horse, my brother!"

How the heart of The Badger leaped in him then! He had ridden before, of course; he had learned to leap on the bare backs of the wildest ponies and cling to them in spite of bucking and in spite of threatening teeth; but he had never before possessed a pony, so frightful was the poverty of Rising Bull with his maimed right hand.

It was a fleet and dainty thing, this painted horse, and as The Badger flew across the plains with the White Hawk running and leaping at his side, and snapping terribly at his hip as though ready to tear his little master from the back of his mount, it seemed to The Badger that he was already a warrior and full-fledged in the tribe! So he laughed as he rode, and when he laughed, the wind of that fierce gallop hummed between his teeth.

They journeyed for three days, using the light of the sun. On the evening of the third day Spotted Ear found a herd of antelope, and he and two other warriors managed to stalk them. Poor Badger could not join in such sport. He had only a bow and arrows behind his saddle, together with an old-fashioned pistol stuck through his belt. And one rarely gets close enough to antelope to use a pistol ball!

He remained behind to watch the fun. Two antelope fell, and they spent the rest of the daylight cutting up the bodies and late into the night they were curing the meat; for they had started on their excursion traveling light. Through the next week, they went chiefly from the dusk to the dawn. In the day they slept in some secure place, with a lookout always on guard. And then, at the last, they found Pawnee sign. It was around an old camp fire. The ashes were blown away—there was only the blackened earth. And when The Badger dismounted, he did as the others were doing, kneeling, or working from a crouch, and lifting and turning blades of grass, and frowning at the ground beneath it. He knew what they were looking for. But he also knew that his eyes could never see it unless it were written in what might be called capitals. A fifteen-year-old youngster who had made himself a brave by taking a scalp the year before was now the one who made the

find and announced its meaning. Then the horse thieves sat in a circle to discuss. Spotted Ear believed that that sign was so fresh that in three hours they would be up with the party who left the fire sign behind them—unless the latter were traveling at high speed. But the fifteen-year-old, Running Deer, swore that there was plenty of time. They might ride as hard as they chose.

Spotted Ear turned to The Badger. "We have not used your medicine, White Badger. What does it tell you now?"

The Badger was perfectly prepared for such a question, and he knew how to answer it. He stooped and picked up a palm full of dust and pebbles. The dust he fanned away with his breath until only the pebbles remained. These he pretended to study for a moment. At last he tossed them into the air and announced:

"Spotted Ear is right! We must ride carefully, or we shall be up with them before the night!"

His companions were much impressed by the nonsense of this ceremony, as he expected they would be.

"What do the stones tell you? How do they speak?" whispered Spotted Ear to the boy.

"They speak inside my ear like the squeaks of little baby field mice," said The Badger solemnly. And Spotted Ear sighed deeply with wonder and with envy.

However, they went on with great caution, now. And even while The Badger was praying that they might come upon fresher signs of the Pawnees, his prayer was granted. Spotted Ear himself, riding in the lead by a hundred yards, suddenly reined his horse back on a hummock and came hastily back to them, speaking not a word, but with both hands talking in that sign language which is the universal speech of the plains, among the Indians. He told them that he had found five Pawnees, well mounted and armed, riding ahead of them.

So they waited for a few minutes and then rode forward again, keeping the most careful watch. They rode until the dusk was gathering, and then they halted and prepared to make a camp for the night; but now, as the dusk turned to the dark, they saw far ahead of them a faint glow spotting the blackness of the night.

"Those are lodge fires far away," said Running Deer. "Come, White Badger. You and I shall ride out and look at them!"

They did not need to ride far. By the time they had crossed the first rise of ground, they saw before them the glowing lights of a great village—five hundred or a thousand warriors might be in that camp. And when they lay on the ground, they could hear a trembling murmur out of the distance—a sound made up of the barking and the howling of dogs and the screaming voices of children—all wonderfully blended. You or I could not have heard it. Perhaps Danny Croydon himself could not have heard, but it was perceptible to the ear of our wild raised Badger, and it was very plain, of course, to the child of the plains—Running Deer.

He insisted on going closer. So they whirled on for half a mile until sights and sounds were very clear, and then they came to the edge of a wide, still water—no, not entirely still, for when they halted their ponies, they could hear the faint lisping of the current as it stirred in the center of the stream. They swept on up the stream until they found the lights streaking faintly the black water of the stream with little pools and fine brush strokes of orange.

"This is enough," said Running Deer softly. "There are enough there for all of us, are there not, brother?"

The heart of The Badger was high in his throat. For he had been con-

gratulating himself every moment since he first saw the size of the Pawnee town; surely, he had said to himself, they will not dare to adventure near so great a place! Now he saw that he had gone out to steal with madmen for companions!

Running Deer turned his horse, and The Badger beside him, when a harsh voice in a strange tongue hailed them on the far side of the water.

"Pawnee!" whispered Running Deer. "Do not ride away. I can talk their tongue. Perhaps we shall play with them!"

And he raised his voice and called to them in studied indifference. A little pause followed his remark. Then a more friendly hail from beyond the water, to which Running Deer replied. He translated: "They want to know why we turn back from the camp. I tell them that we think that we have found the sign of a small party of Cheyennes! Now, listen! They want to cross and come with us—ay, they are coming uninvited!"

The other two, indeed, pushed their horses straightway into the water, and drowned the spots of orange light from the distant lodges with waves of black cast up by the knees of their horses. They came splashing out on the nearer shore.

"I this man on the right—you that man on the left. The knife, little brother, so that the village may hear nothing!"

So saying, the heart of Running Deer rose so great and so high in his throat that he began to sing aloud as he pushed his horse toward the approaching pair, and The Badger, half swooning with terror, moved on toward the other man. The two halted. One was speaking sharply and rapidly, designating the small size of The Badger with many signs in the starlight. But Running Deer kept straight on, laughing as he spoke until he was near enough, and then The Badger saw the wink of the stars on a naked knife blade.

He drew his own knife and lunged at the same moment, setting his teeth in desperation. But his hand was neither so swift nor so steady as that of the other. The Pawnee shrank from the stroke with a gasp, and the edge of The Badger's knife merely slashed the front of his tunic. His own knife was in his hand at the same instant, and a touch of his heel against the flank lifted his horse forward. The Badger felt his pinto stagger at the shock of that greater weight; he saw the flash of the coming steel straight at his throat. And then a pale streak intervened—the White Hawk, lunging for the throat of the stranger and closing teeth on his arm instead. The next instant the point of Red Eagle's gift knife was buried for the first time in human flesh—in the soft hollow of a man's throat. Like a broken tree the tall warrior toppled from his saddle. As he struck the ground, the body of The Badger was on top of him, and the knife of The Badger was striking for his heart.

All the fear had left his heart—he was filled, instead, with a savage joy that made him set his teeth and shudder. Then he found an Indian song of triumph bubbling up through his lips:

"I, The Badger, have seized in my claws—I have torn and rent the Pawnee—I have laid him on the ground—I shall take his scalp, and his spirit shall never leave him."

"Brother, little brother," came the voice of Running Deer, quivering with joy, choked with joy, "make haste! Make haste. We may have need of our time!"

He himself was squatting on the breast of his victim working at the scalp lock, and The Badger followed suit.

Danny Croydon can speak of this with the most perfect good humor, but it turns my stomach a little whenever I think of it. Yet, as Croydon always

says: "The Badger was at that time an Indian, pure Indian, and nothing but an Indian. Wouldn't he have been a fool if he had refused to take that scalp? An Indian fool, I mean?"

One has to agree. Logic is logic—but sometimes it is devilish disagreeable stuff, you will admit with me! And disagreeable or not, there is no escape from it!

I say that The Little Badger, in the starlight, ripped his first scalp lock from the head of the enemy and leaped to his feet and shook it in the air. But there was still other work. Like his companion, Running Deer, he had to work the dead man out of his clothes. Running Deer had finished long before and came to help and, the moment he did so, he groaned with much envy:

"I have taken a scalp from an old man—a weak man!" he made complaint. "But you, White Badger, have taken the scalp of a great chief. Feel the beading and the quill work! Five squaws have worked a whole winter to make such a suit as this! And look—there are two revolvers—one at each hip. Ah—ah—look at him even by the stars. He is a great man. He is as big as a fallen cliff. Now look at his horse, also. Ha, Little Badger, there is a horse for *you!* He is taller than my own head!"

As a matter of fact, they did not need daylight to show them that the horse from which the chief had fallen was a stallion as magnificent as the gelding which the other victim had bestrode was broken down and weak. Only with difficulty could The Badger clamber up the side of this fine animal. Under his knee he felt the steel barrel of a rifle on a holster there. Certainly, as he braced back his shoulders and tossed up his head, the air of that night had turned to wine in his nostrils!

CHAPTER VIII.

STANDING ELK AND THE BADGER.

IF they had come with a dash, they returned like a whirlwind. And the five waiting men received them with deep murmurs of joy and of envy. Rather than a thousand stolen horses they would prize these two scalps. For Pawnee scalps grow not on every bush—even for the picking of Cheyenne warriors.

There was even one brave who suggested that enough and more than enough had been already done to make this a notable party of the war path. But the others were only the keener for the work which lay ahead of them. They crossed the river at once, and they then worked into the low-swelling hills behind the camp. There they consulted. The village was still full of light and noise, and it was decided that, instead of attempting to take advantage of the noise to cover their approach, they would wait until the big Indian town was silent for the night.

All too rapidly, in the ears of The Badger, the noise died away. The first exultation which had followed the killing of the unknown warrior had died away, now; there was no singing joy in his brain as he thought of the thing behind him. All that he could concentrate upon was the task which was ahead. And even when the town lay black and still beneath them, it seemed to The Badger the crowning height of folly to go nearer to the swarming danger, even when the village slept. For he knew that the nest of hornets does not more quickly answer the tap on the hive than does the Indian town come to life at the first alarm, no matter how light.

But to his horror, these madmen who were with him decided that they would advance upon the town not with a stealthy approach with horses and then a wild dash to run off what untethered

horses they might, but by crawling on foot to the town and cutting loose the finest animals they could find!

So much had the scalps raised the heart of the entire party!

One man was left with the horses. Ah, how The Badger yearned to be given that post, for all the man with the horses had to do was to wait until the stampede of the Pawnee horses began toward the hills, and then cut in behind them and give mounts to the thieves. But that post was left to the youngest brave next to Running Deer. The medicine of White Badger seemed to have proved of such excelling quality that they would not have dreamed of leaving him out of the final work.

Down from the hills they went, then, and when they came close to the edges of the town, they flattened out on the ground and began to work forward like so many snakes. To The Badger it was like creeping into a mist; the heart of which is colder than ice. He could hardly breathe, and his limbs shook under him, and cold perspiration poured out from beneath his arms, and nausea seized him in the pit of the stomach.

This he told to Danny Croydon, and also, he confided in that old hunter how he despaired, at that moment, of ever becoming a really courageous brave, worthy of being a Cheyenne. Far less to become such a leader as Little Grouse wished to make of him. He felt at that moment that he was a coward. He said that he would have turned back, deliberately, even if it meant that he would be known as a woman forever after! But just behind him slid the noiseless form of the White Hawk, and he felt that he dared not move back lest that wise beast should read him and scorn him!

Well, that is an odd confession to come from the lips of The Badger, as you will agree when you have heard a little more of him.

The crucial test was when they came close to the rim of the village and two braves reeled suddenly out of the flap of a lodge and came straight toward them. They had, apparently, secreted some brandy or alcohol from the rest of their lodge companions and had accumulated a glorious "edge." But when they were a few strides from the row of flat shadows on the ground, they decided that they must go back for a farewell drink, apparently. When they disappeared behind the tent flap, the Cheyennes closed on the town with a rush and conveyed themselves behind the next tepee. There were half a dozen horses tethered here, and instantly the whisper of sharp knife edges in leather began. Those horses were loosed, but not startled. They began to wander slowly away. Others must be loosed. And the harvest was as yet hardly begun.

The plan was now to be developed through a more dangerous stage. It was that young demon, Running Deer himself, who suggested the scheme. The party was to separate, because they would then make much less noise. They would perform, each of them, a half circle, winding up near the center of the town. So each man cut off by himself. And White Badger wished that the end of his life might be no further than a minute away—so sick at heart was he.

Do not imagine that he was wandering through a silent town. For when one speaks of a "quiet" Indian village, one simply means one in which a lesser pandemonium is raging. Here it was the middle of the night, but the noise swept in waves back and forth among the lodges. There were wails of children who startled into wakefulness; there were flurries and scurries of dog fighting in various parts of the town. And sometimes a dozen horses would be neighing at once.

In the midst of that confusion The Badger stole on his way, heeding noth-

ing in the world saving human noises. Once or twice he cut a tethered horse free. But on the whole, he used his mind to watch the flaps of the closed lodges. And he had just passed between two that narrowly verged upon one another when he fairly stumbled upon a brave standing stalwart before the flap of a third lodge.

When I say that he stumbled on the warrior, I do not mean that he actually touched him, but terror stopped The Badger with the suddenness of a stone wall when he saw that erect, wide-shouldered figure, a statuesque being with arms folded high on his chest. Had he not heard something, perhaps?

Then in a flash he had whirled on The Badger. Instinct—nothing else, made The Badger poise his knife at the breast of the brave, but instinct did not make him strike, and if the Pawnee had looked down to the weapon, he would have known by the tremor of the starlight on the blade how the hand was shaking that held it. But the Pawnee did not glance down. At such a time it did not become a warrior of any heart to take notice of the nearness of death. Instead, he fixed his glance steadily upon the boy form of The Badger and the skulking white shadow of the wolf dog in the rear.

Then he said, in very good Cheyenne: "It is The Badger and the White Hawk. You are welcome, my brother. What will you have from Standing Elk?"

The boy could not answer, for the name had paralyzed him. Standing Elk was a chief so great that, compared with his fame, such a leader as Red Eagle, let us say, disappeared into the thinnest air. So great was that name, indeed, that it seemed to expand the physical dimensions of the brave. So The Badger stood dumb, unable to realize, it seemed, that the point of his knife was a fraction of an inch from the heart of the greatest among the Pawnee leaders. And the Pawnee, in turn, was reading that silence in quite another fashion. His big hands began, slowly, to close, and the muscles of his arms to harden, and his arched breast commenced to swell and the iron of resolution entered his soul and he prepared himself to die, but to die struggling, at least.

Then, from The Badger: "Standing Elk, I have been looking for you through this town."

"It is good that we have met," said Standing Elk. "And yet," he could not help adding with a grim humor, "if you had asked any warrior in the village, he would have pointed out my tepee."

The Badger felt a trifle more at ease, but that did not keep him from holding his knife within the breadth of a hair of the breast of the chief. Only, from the corner of his eye, he took note that the lodge from which the chief had issued was a towering affair, twice the size of the ordinary tepee.

"The White Hawk," said the boy, "was in a hurry. He would not stop. He said that he could smell out the honest man in the Pawnee nation."

"Waugh!" murmured the chief, perhaps not a little pleased by this compliment. But, all the time, his brilliant eyes were staring at the face of the boy and trying to break through to an understanding of him, as it were. However, it was not for nothing that The Badger had spent five years in the center of the stage, ringed with the attention of the Cheyennes. He withstood this scrutiny with the greatest ease.

"Brother," said he, with the tip of his sharp knife resting in the shirt of leather which clothed the chief, "it is not time for you to die."

"That is good!" said Standing Elk.

"But it is time that you should show me the finest horse in the Pawnee town!"

Standing Elk drew himself up a full inch or two taller than before.

"Brother," said he softly, "do you

speak of the finest horse or of the ten or the twenty finest horses that Pawnees own?"

But The Badger did not care so much for ten or twenty. Ten or twenty horses were the wealth that would come to the hand of Little Grouse and Rising Bull. But one horse, fleet as the wind, was for himself. And that horse would take him away from danger or into it, exactly as he chose. Surely if he could find the cream of the Pawnee stock, the very best of their famous horses I am sure——

"I speak of one horse, Standing Elk," said he. "I speak of one horse so great and so fine that its life is almost worth the life of Standing Elk."

"See, White Badger, you make me into a thief. Follow me!"

So he went stalking through the night at a measured gait. And The Badger could not help adding a soft warning: "The White Hawk is behind you, brother. While you walk slowly, he does not see you!"

There was an inaudible grunt from Standing Elk, who stopped a moment later before three young horses tethered with their heads close together.

"Look!" said Standing Elk. "These are three horses like three great braves. They are better than three hundred common dog soldiers. But they are not, altogether, worth one like this!"

He led them around the tepee to the farther side, and there the boy beheld, against the stars, the most glorious figure of a horse that ever gladdened the eyes of man.

I do not speak for myself, for when I saw Red Wind he was so very old that gray hairs were beginning to appear in his glossy coat, and the gloss itself was departing; but I have the oath of Danny Croydon for the truth about Red Wind. He was a three-year-old stallion, when the hand of The Badger first fell upon his neck. I would have given a very great deal to have seen him by the stars of that same night. He dipped his head and extended his muzzle toward Standing Elk.

"Brother," said the boy, much moved, "do you own him?"

"I own him," said Standing Elk through his teeth. Fiercely, because he feared lest he might speak tenderly. "I could have given you one of the three, but I am an honest man, White Badger. Take him. He is the price for me!"

The great chief did all of this so freely and so gently that a certain spirit of nobleness came over the hard heart of The White Badger himself, until he said: "Standing Elk, when I am a warrior, I shall come to find you. Then I shall fight you for this horse."

"Then Red Wind will blow back to me. Deal kindly with him, White Badger, as I have dealt honestly with you."

"Farewell, Standing Elk. I shall not forget," answered White Badger.

With that he twitched the reins to the side and that perfectly trained horse answered with a side leap that carried him behind a tepee and out of sight of the Pawnee chief. The latter, at the same instant, raised a war yell that pierced the ears of the boy and brought an answering wail instantly from every sleeper within hearing of the shout.

CHAPTER IX.

PURSUIT.

AS The Badger wheeled his horse into the first open within the lodges, he saw a swirl of men issuing from the flaps of the tepees—most of them more than half naked, all yelling at the top of their lungs—some with weapons, and some without, and all huddling and jostling each other this way and that. To increase the confusion, there was the clamor of the dogs, which were darting in every direction through the mob, and adding as much to the disturbance as they did to the noise. Women and

children were rushing out, and even these were armed—if with no more than a club.

But, in the meantime, there was a shout in a familiar key, and he saw Running Deer whip onto the back of a beautiful bay mare and drive into the press of people, swinging his arms and yelling like a madman. And, behind him, scurried five other men, each seated upon a horse of some sort.

The Badger was instantly among them, and as they swept into the crowd together, knocking down women and children and making the warriors leap for safety to either side, they imparted a movement and then a heady impetus to the other horses which were already loose by the score and which were rearing, plunging, biting, and kicking like so many demons. And, in an instant, the whole mass of horseflesh had whirled off, with the robbers flattened on the backs, or clinging to the sides of the mounts they had chosen.

But all of this happened in the snap of a finger. There was barely time for the Pawnees to know that enemies were in their midst when, like dust and leaves sucked up by a whirlwind, the whole herd of horses and the yelling Cheyennes among the rearmost, was shooting through the village and away to the open country beyond!

Not without a pursuit behind them. The Pawnees were on the naked backs of their horses in a twinkling and flying after the fugitives. For they were wild with rage. In the memory of their oldest men there had not been a horse raid executed upon them with such boldness and with such amazing success. The reason for the success was that very boldness. It was incalculable—not to be guarded against! But how hot were the Pawnees on the trail! Every man was on horseback—every man was whipping and kicking and yelling his way on the heels of the fugitives.

However, there is a tremendous impetus in flight itself. Nothing can match the first mile or two of a really frightened horse. And the stolen herd shot away with a dizzy speed, the thieves only gradually falling back from the unburdened horses.

But what amazed The White Badger was that there was no need for him to fall back. He was sitting, indeed, in the midst of the wind itself. Only a strong pull on the tender mouth of the stallion could keep him back or, in another moment, he would have darted through the midst of the racing herd. But, as The Badger sat him with tight reins, what power, what gigantic power there was in the legs which spurned the ground and turned it to flowing, black quicksilver beneath them!

There was only one danger, and that was to the guard who had been left with the horses among the hills. He had remained on his own pony, which was not overfleet, and now the leading Pawnees, and particularly one big man whom The Badger believed to be Standing Elk, began to gain rapidly. But a Cheyenne never abandons an imperiled brother. Every man among them dropped to the rear and sent a blast of bullets whirring back toward the pursuit, while one brought up a splendid animal—the horse which had gone to The Badger as a partial reward when he took his first scalp. That horse was brought alongside the brave on the failing pony. He made the change from running horse to horse with a wonderful courage and speed that brought the heart of The Badger into his throat—and then away shot the Cheyennes again, with bullets now humming everywhere about them. Here a horse squealed with pain, and there one fell—but starlight shooting from the back of a running horse is not the most accurate marksmanship in the world. And there was only one hit recorded—a grazing shot that nipped the left shoulder of Spotted Ear.

They had a vast advantage, those fugitives. They had the sweep of the herd before them to carry their horses gayly along, and the pursuit faded and faded—and when the dawn came gray in the eastern sky, the horses were staggering, but the Pawnees were not in sight.

Running Deer and The Badger—because their mounts were the freshest, then turned the herd and headed them toward the river. They crossed it before sunup, and now they were well on their way toward the Cheyennes.

They were ten days on the downward journey; they were six days rushing back. For victory makes the heart light. They drove before them six score of horses, the cream of the Pawnee herd—nearly twenty horses for every man in the raiding party! And, sweetest of all, they carried two scalps at their belts.

There was joy enough for all, you will say, but most of all was there joy for Spotted Ear. He had led forth his first war party, and these were the spoils. Let the others have shares greater than his own, if fate would have it so. But even when Running Deer and The Badger, in days to come, told of the taking of those scalps and the counting of the coups, they would have to begin: "On a day, Spotted Ear led out a war party——"

That was glory enough for him! From this point on, his word would be listened to with perfect attention in the most weighty councils of the nation.

All the way, they never once sighted the Pawnees behind them—for the very good reason that the day after the horse raid a great band of the Ogallalla Sioux came down to harry the Pawnees with war, and they had to give up the horse-thief chase and turn back to sterner battle.

But, on the sixth day, the seven thieves rode very slowly. They rode slowly partly because all the horses were tired—except that unwearying miracle of flesh, Red Wind—and partly because they hoped that they would be sighted in the distance by some Cheyenne scout who might bear the good news to the town and cause a welcoming escort to pour out around them. But here I must pause to say that the thief among the Indians was not like the thief among the white men. He who stole from an enemy was a glorious hero—the more of a hero the greater the theft. And the more of sneaking skill with which the theft was accomplished, the more the exploit could be boasted of. So the seven, driving all those fine ponies ahead of them, were tremendously gay.

And, because no mature man can be as happy as a boy, the happiest of the lot was The Badger. And, in fact, he had reason to rejoice. He had the two finest horses of the entire lot. Upon one he rode, and upon the other there was a fine, new rifle, and two excellent new Colt revolvers, plus pounds and pounds of ammunition! Ay, and a scalp at his belt.

It was a prophecy of blood, but it was a prophecy which thrilled him to the soul with joy, I assure you!

Now, this villainous young crew were presently spied by the very scout they yearned for, who darted part way toward them, understood their identity by distant signs, and straightway shot off toward the village, swinging his hands above his head and screaming like a fiend. For when one Indian conquers, his whole tribe tastes the vital joy of the victory.

Presently the swarm came out—men with their ponies at full speed—unsaddled and unbridled, and they themselves, like circus riders, clinging to the sides of their horses and yelling their savage joy. They circled, whooping, around the herd of captured horses, pointing to the finer animals, and then waving their arms and——

When I described such a thing to a friend, he said: "What? Will an In-

dian act like anything other than a Roman stoic?"

To which I answer that it is only when he is among strangers and in a strange situation that the Indian assumes a mask, but in his real nature, as you might expect, he is simply the undecorated barbarian, filled to the neck with deviltry, merriment, and vulgar enjoyment of life. He can no more keep from laughter and shouting and gesticulating than a child of seven. The gravest person in the entire crowd of them was the white boy, The Badger, who sat on the back of Red Wind, which was dancing sidewise with his chin tucked almost back to his breast in the excitement of the moment.

Take them by and large, a pony is a pony to an Indian. He pays by the number of ponies, not by the quality of them. Every pony is fast, stubborn, wicked, enduring. All of these things can be taken for granted. But still an Indian lives too much in the saddle not to have an inner sense for a true king of the breed, and when they saw Red Wind, they were seeing a king of horses in very fact. I have heard Danny Croydon describe the stallion to me. But details clog the picture. I will simply have you know that he was a blood bay—actually red as flowing blood, well-nigh—with a muzzle that could drink from the Arab's "pint-pot," the eye of a deer, the heart of a lion.

He was so beautiful when he stood at attention that even Indians grinned with joy at him. And these first Cheyennes, after they had congratulated their friends and their relations who were on the expedition, and after they had poured praise upon the head of Spotted Ear, naturally gathered with a greater wonder around the youngster who rode the finest of the herd and who carried on a little pole a great scalp. He and Running Deer alone! But Running Deer had not the horse, or the shining new rifle.

Oh, yes, with all of his gravity The Badger managed to draw the rifle from its scabbard—the finest of the breech-loading type—and show it to the admiring Cheyennes, and when they begged for a touch of it, he thrust it slowly, smiling, back into its holster. Then, one by one, he took out from their scabbards of polished leather, two new Colts, perfect and brilliant with newness! With these—and the horse which he rode—the other fine horse at his heels, led on a rawhide lariat—there was no question as to who carried off the palm of this expedition.

They paused just out of reach of the town, where the women and the old men were seething on the outskirts, their yells of triumph wavering across the plains. And the boys and the girls, light-footed as the males, for all of that—came charging out to meet them. Here they split the herd deftly into seven equal sections, and they went in one by one—Spotted Ear first, as the leader of the expedition, and then the eldest warrior following him, and last Running Deer, with The Badger behind him.

Ah, what a climax it was—the two boys of the expedition had gathered in the richest fruits. And how rich a fruit a Pawnee scalp is to a Cheyenne cannot be taught from a page of cold print!

Yet most of the yelling was for Running Deer. Well, he was a beautiful creature, that Indian. And in his boyhood he must have been an Indian Apollo. Besides, he was so good-natured that the entire tribe loved him. And when they shouted for him, he was continually turning and waving with both hands and a wide smile toward The Badger, as though to tell the tribesmen that to this man the real homage was due. This man-child who had outdone them all.

He could not persuade the others, however. And they looked with only

a mild satisfaction upon the splendid loot which The Badger had brought with him. Do you ask me why? Because, simply, a man who is in league with mysterious powers does not deserve so much credit as does the man who works by the power of his unassisted naked hand.

And if there had been doubts concerning the youngster before that day, there was not the slightest doubt before the scalp dance, which terminated this day, was concluded.

The Badger was an enchanter—one to be respected and feared. But who could love, really, one so young who dealt with the dark powers and derived benefits from them through who could tell what dismal contracts? There was no question as to the very great bigness of the medicine of The Badger. But there was a sizable doubt as to the *goodness* of it!

Only two hearts were too full for doubting—Little Grouse and Rising Bull. Little Grouse wept with purest joy as she tied up the horses and ran to borrow lariats to tie up more of them when her own leather gave out. She cried again with joy when she saw the guns and the scalp and the two fine steeds which had fallen to the share of The Badger. But when tears ran down the face of Rising Bull, it was from sheer satisfaction because White Badger had come safely home to them.

CHAPTER X.

THE SCALP DANCE.

THEY held the scalp dance at once in a haste which did not make it less significant. There was only one awkward dancer for that occasion, and the awkward one was, of course, The Badger. He was used to being in the eye of the people, but he was annoyed beyond measure to have to prance up and down with a ring of other braves, the six who had accompanied him on this expedition. The little circle faced inward toward the central pole from which the two scalps dangled, and as they chanted their song the mass of people who watched and listened maintained the most perfect silence. It was only when one of the dancers whooped—for those yells of exultation were all that distinguished this dance from any other—that the crowd joined in heart-thrilling shrieks of triumph. Presently Spotted Ear leaped to the inside of the circle and began a loud chant of his own—telling how the thought of starting on that war path had come to him, and how he had gone to The Badger and found him lying asleep on the bank of the river and called to him, and The Badger had swum ashore and sat on the back of the white wolf and listened.

This was merely a proper beginning for Spotted Ear's narrative, which became momently more wonderful. Spotted Ear went back to the circle of dancers with shouts of high applause ringing in his ear. One after another the rest of the party sprang to the inside of the circle, and each had some marvel to tell of the work which he had done. At last Running Deer, with a shriek and a bound, touched the scalp which he had taken and began the narration of what he had done. And, as he shouted and chanted and acted out the story, quick wine began to wriggle through the veins of The Badger. For it seemed, according to the tale of Running Deer, that it was not an old man he had slain, but a youth, a giant of stature and strength, and they had struggled mightily together until at last with the strength of his grip Running Deer had broken the wrist bones of the other.

"The knife fell out of his hand—whoop-e-e-e!" screamed Running Deer. "I snatched it out of the air as it fell. I drove it into his breast and through a rib and into his heart. And the Pawnee fell to the ground. I sat on his back and I took his scalp that the Cheyennes

might be more glorious and the lodge of Running Deer might be pointed at by other men—by warriors!"

Running Deer sprang back to his place, and The Badger had come to his turn. To miss that turn was to proclaim oneself less than a man and miss half the sweets of victory. But The Badger had no intention of missing his chance. Naked like all the rest except for the single breechcloth, he leaped into the center of the ring with the light glowing on the sun-polished bronze of his body. He stood with his hands flung above his head and that head raised, and his body strained upward on his toes and his arms rigid with exultation.

"Listen to me, brothers. I am The White Badger. By the black water I found a great chief. The lights of Pawnee lodges were on the river beside him. Red lights, like his blood. He was about to die. He did not think of that. He came riding to me as tall as a tree. I ran at him. He saw the stars on my knife and raised his own arm to strike."

He paused to tilt his head still farther back and laugh and weave his body from side to side. And men and women and little children strained forward to hear him.

"Then I caught his arm by the elbow. He thought that his elbow had struck on a rock, but it was my hand, and his knife hung helpless in the air like an icicle in the winter that hangs from a stone by the river. So I held up his arm. I struck him between the bones at the bottom of his neck. His voice became a sound like a bubbling stream, and he fell and rolled on the ground. I took off his scalp while he still lived. Then I stabbed him through the back and stripped him of his clothes, because he was a great chief. His clothes of beadwork and of quillwork are now in my lodge. Go to Little Grouse and ask for them. Go to Rising Bull and ask, and he will show you a new rifle, and revolvers, and much powder and much lead for bullets. He will show you, too, how Tirawa was kind to The White Badger and led him into the camp of the Pawnees and covered the eyes of their men with sleep and turned their great warriors into stone.

"They saw The Badger coming, and they trembled, and they reached for their guns, but Tirawa covered their eyes and put them in a fog and turned them to stone. And Tirawa led The Badger through the camp to the center of it and showed to him a horse so bright that he shone even under the stars—the stars shone on him as if he were a pool of water. The Badger took that horse, the Red Wind. He took the best horse in the Pawnee nation. He took the horse of Standing Elk and rode away and brought back all that he took in the battle to Little Grouse and Rising Bull to make them happy."

I have left out all of the "waughs" and the whoops and the knife-edge shrieks with which The Badger punctuated his story and gave it a rhythm—and how the entire tribe went mad with joy when they saw that a child like this had actually taken a scalp of a great man among the Pawnees.

How great they did not know until the next day when word come in from the Pawnees that the first man killed by The Badger had been no less a person than the brother of Standing Elk—a warrior hardly less celebrated than that chief: Clouded Sky, was his name.

That part of the news was delightful enough; for it was known, at the same time, that the whole tribe was mourning for the death of Clouded Sky. But the second part of the story which was carried to camp was not so delightful. Red Eagle himself came in the evening to talk it over with Rising Bull and Little Grouse and The White Badger. He came in, agreeable to fixed custom, passed in the right direction around the

fire, and was asked by Rising Bull to take a seat next to him on a folded buffalo robe which Little Grouse spread for the guest. It was noticeable, now, that though there were three families and two efficient warriors in that lodge, yet so great was the prestige which The Badger had gained in this latest exploit, that Rising Bull had been granted the place of honor just opposite the flap of the tent.

At his side Red Eagle sat down, but his eyes were fixed upon The Badger.

He told them the story softly, slowly. How the same report which came to him of the death of Clouded Sky brought also with it the unlucky tidings that Standing Elk, the most dreaded enemy of the Cheyenne nation, had been at the mercy of a Cheyenne knife which had not struck home, but, instead, had chosen to accept a bribe—the price of the life of that terrible chief was taken in the form of a horse! And then the guilty Cheyenne had dared to come back to his tribe; only he had been wise enough not to tell the story of that night's work in full!

So, speaking softly, the chief detailed the wicked story of mercy given to a foe. And his gloomy eyes were fixed upon the face of the boy so steadily and so ominously that White Hawk stood up and stepped before his young master and growled.

"What is the soul of a man who values riches more than glory?" asked the chief in the end.

It would have been hard to tell whether shame or wonder most filled the eyes of Little Grouse and her husband. But there was fear in Little Grouse—for she felt that she had made a painted image and the painted image had turned into a man! She had dreamed of a great, a terrible warrior, and the mighty man of war had become a fact!

"He is now on the war path!" she told Red Eagle gravely.

"He is young, but his brain is old," said the chief. "Let him come with me and speak for himself."

He beckoned to the boy who cast a single, praying glance at his foster mother. When she nodded, he rose without a word and walked out of the lodge behind the chief with the White Hawk gliding at his heels.

They stepped alone through the black of the night, and the hand of Red Eagle rested on the shoulder of the youth.

"Tell me," said Red Eagle gently, "that you have been very wrong."

It occurred to the boy that, if he admitted error, all would be forgiven, though a lesson might be preached to him. But he did not feel like admitting error. Nothing, indeed, was further from his mind.

"I have done what Tirawa told me to do," said he.

Red Eagle spat into the dust with fury. "Did Tirawa tell you to spare the life of a Pawnee that lay under your knife? Do not say it, my son, because then the ghost of the next Cheyenne who is scalped by Standing Elk will come to haunt you and moan in your lodge in winter nights and fill you with unhappiness!"

"Well," said the boy, and now the white blood and the white brain began to work in him—"he stood there in front of me as close as you are. When he turned at me, I had the point of my knife an inch from his heart. What would you have had me do?"

"Stab—strike home!" cried Red Eagle savagely.

"I can stab, too," said The Badger with sufficient egotism. "Did I not kill Clouded Sky with my own hand? But Clouded Sky was ready to fight. How could I kill a helpless man?"

Red Eagle stopped with wonder.

"Is it not better," he asked, "to kill without danger to yourself?"

"There is no pleasure in that," said the boy.

"Do you mean that?" asked the chief, striking a hand across his forehead, because he felt that he was listening to madness.

"Consider this," said the boy. "If White Hawk had been caught in a trap so that I could safely beat him almost to death and teach him to obey me—would that have been a thing worth doing?"

"Answer me!" said the chief, still unwilling to believe his ears. "If you could creep into a Pawnee camp, and if you could find ten men lying on their backs asleep with their throats naked, would you not cut their throats one by one?"

The Badger, unaware of the deep significance of this question, paused and yawned. "Bah!" said he at last. "That would better be work for White Hawk!"

"Answer me!" cried the chief. "Would you not do it yourself?"

"Consider this," said The Badger, "that you are glad to dry scalps in the smoke of your lodge?"

"Yes," said the chief. "We are glad to take scalps."

"But do you take the scalps of buffalo calves when they are hurt and cannot stand up to help themselves?"

"That is a foolish question," answered Red Eagle with some sternness. "Why should one scalp a calf?"

"Ah," cried The Badger, for his nimble wits had worked quite around the Indian and then back again. "You will admit that. And I say that the pleasure in a scalp is in knowing that it came from the head of a fighting man who struck bravely, but not straight enough. But who will want the scalp of a sleeping man? It is nothing! It is the scalp of a calf which was helpless! I could not take it. Tirawa would stop my hand from making the circle. That is the truth and it is right. You yourself will now say so!"

"Boy—child——" The chief was about to add: "Fool!" but he hesitated and changed his mind. For one could not tell about this strange youth. At any moment he might give a sign to the wolf dog, for instance, and the teeth of that monster would be in the throat of Red Eagle. It was very well to handle this youngster with a considerable caution. One could never tell what might happen from one who dealt with spirits and powers of another world!

"Go back to your lodge," said Red Eagle at last, "and tell your father that I must speak to him in this place at once!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE BADGER ON THE PRAIRIE.

THERE was hardly a more important crisis than this in the entire life of The White Badger. When Rising Bull came to Red Eagle he was told briefly that his son must prepare at once to leave the village and journey to the main section of the tribe where the chief medicine man, Black Antelope was to be found.

"Because," said the pious Red Eagle, "this boy had in his hands a greater chance of doing harm to our tribe's enemies than he may ever have again, and he did not take advantage of it for one of two reasons: either he was too covetous of that famous horse, Red Wind, or else he was not properly instructed in what is right and good for a warrior to do."

"Ah," said Rising Bull, "my wife and I talk to him words that are like iron. He is still young!"

"Brother," said Red Eagle gently, "I know that your heart is good, and I think that the heart of Little Grouse is good also. But I am sure that the mind of The White Badger is growing up in a strange way. We must send him to a man who will teach him better ways. To-morrow he must start!"

Rising Bull went back to his wife and said to her tersely: "We are all in

danger. It is said that wrong thoughts are in the head of The Badger. Therefore one of us must have put them there. The life of Standing Elk was under the point of his knife—and he let that man live! Will you think, Little Grouse, of what his fame would have been before he became a warrior if in one night he had killed two such chiefs among the Pawnees? I do not know what has been teaching him strange things. To-morrow he starts to live at the feet of the Black Antelope. His mind will be made good if it can be done. In the meantime, remember the things which you have taught him!"

He said this with a frown which made Little Grouse tremble and remember, though he had never struck her, that there was more weight in the one hand remaining to him than there was in both of hers. She took The White Badger aside, therefore, and asked him first in a voice filled with trembling fury why he had not slain the great chief when the golden opportunity was at hand?

"Look!" said the impertinent young rascal. "I have ridden and talked with warriors. Why should I answer the questions of a squaw?"

"Ah, little devil!" cried she, and took him by the nape of the neck.

There was a great deal of muscular power in the lithe young body of The Badger, but since his foster mother once had him in her hands—those hands so strengthened and hardened by work—it was very doubtful whether he could escape from her grip—at least before he had received a stern drubbing. He did not intend to risk the fight if there was no need.

"Mother," said he through his teeth, "you are a fool. Take your hand from me or I shall have White Hawk rip open your flabby old throat. Or if he misses that, I have a knife ready in my hand!"

She released him instantly. "There is no good blood in you," she told him savagely.

"There is blood which you do not know," said The Badger.

At this, Little Grouse trembled. It was only very rarely that a word escaped the lips of the boy concerning his white skin—sun-bronzed as it now was to the darkness of any Indian.

"Ah, Little Badger," said she, trying to fondle him, "you have never loved me!"

He struck her hands away.

"I do not wish to be mauled by a woman," said he. "What have you to say to me?"

And she trembled again. The only love that she had for him was the love of the riches which, she was convinced, would flow from him upon her husband and upon herself. For the rest, she partly distrusted him because he was not of her blood, and partly hated him because he had once been a tool in her hands and was now something more! She had started to make of him a great work, but he had exceeded her expectations by how much!

So she told him, briefly, what Red Eagle had decided concerning him.

She said: "Black Antelope is a wise man and a good man. Some people say that he loves wealth. I cannot tell. You can tell when you put your bright eyes on him. Go sit at his feet. Watch him. Speak gently when he speaks to you. Remember what he says. Look at me, White Badger! Will it do you any harm to learn by heart even those things which you do not believe?"

The Badger shrugged his shoulders. And he countered on her: "Why have you told me so many lies? Partly about myself, and partly about other things, so that I cannot tell what to trust? I have to learn everything over again from the beginning for myself! But I tell you this, that you or Red Eagle or Black Antelope could not make me kill a sleeping man!"

She shook her head at him. This sort of reasoning was so far past her comprehension that she could merely gape at him.

"I may have told you strange things and taught you some that were not true. But I never taught you such folly as this, White Badger!"

"*You* have not told me. I cannot tell where I learn things. Perhaps from Tirawa," said The Badger, as insolent as ever. "As for going to Black Antelope, I may leave Red Eagle, but I may not go to Black Antelope. There is much room on the plains, and there are many tribes!"

He turned his back on her as sharply as this, but, in his heart, he felt that she had given him the very best of good advice. Furthermore, no matter how he wished to stab her with his cruelty, he would have been the unhappiest boy in the world if he had not been able to think of himself as a Cheyenne, heart and soul.

He prepared for his departure in the morning, therefore, and when the time came, Red Eagle himself came and made a picture of the way he was to travel. It was an art which all of the plains tribes possessed in the old days. These drawings were rude enough, but they could represent trees, rivers, hills, and other things which the traveler would meet by the way. And so Red Eagle made out the map and instructed the boy in the way he was to travel.

"Sit at the feet of Black Antelope," said he. "Learn much. Become wise. If I could leave my village and go to him to learn as you are to learn, I should be very happy! You go not like a boy but like a great warrior, with two fine horses and with many guns!"

For while young White Badger rode one of the horses which he had captured from the Pawnees, he led the Red Wind behind him, to keep that fine animal ever fresh and strong in case of times of sudden need.

Little Grouse came to weep for him, Rising Bull rode out with him a short distance into the prairie—and so he was gone and presently he was all alone. All the plains were green, and all about him seemed a rolled lawn running to the horizon incredibly far and pale. And looking up to the immensity of the pale sky and down to the height of the strong horse of dead Clouded Sky which he rode, it seemed to the boy that he had shrunk very, very small indeed! He was almost nothing, in fact!

It was only when he remembered a certain scalp hanging in the lodge of Rising Bull that his heart expanded again. And he rode on singing a soft Indian chant, which had no particular meaning, except that it fumbled with the idea of what happens to the seed in the ground when the wet of the spring and the warmth of the spring sun comes upon it, and it told of how the green shaft rises from the ground, and of how it climbs slowly and steadily, and of how the fruit comes at last. He did not think of the meaning, however. He thought rather of Black Antelope, and rather than Black Antelope, he thought of the glorious lawn upon which his horses were stepping. His horses—and his guns!

You will understand why he was happy again very shortly as he sent his horses ahead across the prairie. He was half a day away before he found a thing worthy of comment. Then he came upon a streak of black ashes over which sprung ribs of iron, and iron tires from great wheels lay upon the ground. He rode up and down this streak of black, which was in the form of a great semicircle.

He knew well enough what had happened. In a surprise attack, some lucky band of Indians had thrust in between the too slowly closing ends of the caravan, and this was the result—plunder, murder, scalps, and then the fire! How many scalps, however! And particu-

larly, how many scalps were there like that one which hung in the lodge of Red Eagle—of long, black, silken tresses! His heart always leaped when he looked at it. He promised himself such another, on a day!

Do you wonder at the unnatural heart of this boy, who knew that he was white and yet wanted nothing so much as a white scalp? And the scalp of a white woman above all? Well, for one thing the only whites he had ever seen were occasional traders—a greasy, sharp-eyed lot they were! And he had never laid eyes upon a white woman! For the rest, although he knew that he was white, he knew it in a very surface fashion. He knew that his skin was white, but he never pondered upon that subject. His heart and his soul were red—all red—all Cheyenne red, he told himself. He felt no kinship with any other people!

So he exulted over the ruin of this caravan. It might have been a trader's possession. Or it might have been a train of settlers' wagons, slowly treading west and west. The Badger never knew, but he remained to wonder over it. For his part, he hoped that the train was of the latter kind. He had heard much concerning the white women, and everything that he had heard was disgusting. It would have been pleasant to see so many of them as might have belonged to this outfit, running and screaming——

I do not care to step any further into the ugly mind of The Badger on this topic. I only dare to say that he was smiling and even chuckling to himself as he cantered away across the plains again. He found nothing of interest in the rest of that day's journey, or in all of the next. And yet he saw, I suppose, three times as much as most white men would have seen.

It was on the third day that he saw, in the distance, a pale band of mist streaking toward the sky. It was close to the evening. He waited until the coming of the dark in the hope of locating the fire, but when the blackness settled there was nothing against the ground except the bright, big faces of the rising stars. He started off in the direction from which he had seen the mist—which might be smoke. When he had gone forward a certain distance, he dismounted and secured the two horses. Then he went ahead on foot.

One never could tell. It might be a party of more than three. In which case, he would have to retreat as fast as he could. Or it might be a party of two—in which case he might try two shots from his rifle—or one, when the victory was certain. Or, again, it might be Pawnees.

Nevertheless, his heart grew bigger and bigger with joyous excitement as he crept forward, pushing the rifle before him. He went slowly and cautiously, and yet a real Indian would have gone just twice as slowly and with three times as much care.

It cost him all of an hour. And then he came on a thing worth while, indeed—a flare of red so thin and so faint that it would not be visible a hundred yards away, so misty was that light. But, as he came closer and closer, he could see well enough. The skillfully built fire of buffalo chips had been so screened that the light was shut away from all but one side. And there was a dim scent of food in the air to the sensitive nostrils of The Badger.

The fragrance of tobacco smoke overrode all else, now. And The Badger came closer and closer and more and more behind the white man. Oh, how beautiful was the snaky stealth of his movements now! He melted through space. The grass dared not rustle beneath him. And, at length, he came to a halt a scant six feet behind the stranger. Here he lay on his belly and snuggled the gun against his shoulder. The small of the back—or between the shoulder blades—or the neck—or the

back of the head. How could one make a selection among so many tempting targets? He decided, however, that a bullet through the head might spoil the pure beauty of the scalp, which promised to be a rare one, for this man had long, fair hair, almost like the hair of a white woman.

But now, as he sat with his back to the murderer, he clasped his arms around his knees and tilted back his head and began to sing, softly, and then more loudly.

I do not know what it was, but I can guess very close. It was some stupidly sentimental ditty calculated to make the throats of big men who should know better, close tight. No Indian would have cared for that music, however. For what the Indian loved in music was a droning chanting with many a yell to spice it, and a broken, staggering rhythm. And something to sing about, too—death, victory—such themes as these. But I tell you that The Badger, lying in the dark of the plains, and understanding not a word that was said, found the melody so sweet and so sad that tears stung his eyes.

He was suddenly afraid that, by enchantment, this man was about to blind him! For you must remember that it was many a year since The Badger had known tears! The tears cleared away. He crept closer, and made surer of his aim—and then the solitary victim began to clap his hands together in a lively fashion and sing a jig tune.

The Badger found that it was all that he could do to keep from laughing, and the muscle of his heart loosened, and he was very happy. He waited until that song ended, and then, smiling, he curled his finger on the trigger.

Then a thrill of very real terror ran through him when he found that he could not pull that trigger! Look, look! There were half a dozen ponies in the train of this traveler, and their big, bulky, promising packs lay on the ground. And there were guns, too! More than one, to be sure! Here, indeed, was enough wealth to break the heart of every Cheyenne with envy. And yet The Badger lay stretched behind his murdered man and could not shoot!

CHAPTER XII.

DANNY CROYDON.

HE was frightened, as I said before, by this thrill of humanity and the desire to give fair play to the other. And I suppose that I may claim the sense of fair play as the prerogative of the white man from this one instance, if no more! At least, it was an emotion which burned the heart of The Badger.

He reached a trifle forward, and the muzzle of the gun touched the back of the man by the dying fire. The latter stiffened a little, a very little, and then he spoke in English. There was no answer from The Badger, who, of course, had forgotten every syllable of that language. The stranger tried French and Spanish with no better result.

"Be quiet," said The Badger at last, "and raise your hands!"

The other obeyed, and The Badger, taking a Colt instead of a rifle, held it close to the back of the stranger. The latter sat quite still, his arms raised well above his head. And The Badger went rapidly through his clothes. He took a revolver and a hunting knife—there were no other weapons. He took, also, a wallet with some papers and a little gold in it.

"Now," said The Badger, as he stood back, "build up the fire a little."

It was freshened instantly and obediently by the other, and The Badger noticed that though the stranger worked without a sign of haste or a suspicious movement toward the weapons on the ground, still he did not appear to be overcome with fear.

The fire, being freshened, showed a

tongue of flame, and by that flickering light The Badger looked into the face of a man who was to mean much in his life—a wide-shouldered man, thirty years old, with sun-faded hair, and a good fighting, American face. I can think of no better way of describing it. He had a pair of bright, keen eyes which some men had already learned to fear greatly, but The Badger was a little unused to the thought of fear, connected with other men.

Besides, he was angered by the cheerfulness of the white man.

"Well," said the traveler, speaking the Cheyenne tongue so perfectly that The Badger heard him with a violent start, "do you want the fire as a signal to your friends?"

"I want the light," answered the boy grimly, "so that I can see how your scalp looks—while it is on your head!"

The other merely laughed, and rubbed that same scalp complacently.

"I think it will stay there for a long time yet," he answered.

"Waugh!" snarled The Badger, and the Colt jerked its muzzle up in his hand.

To his great astonishment, the white man showed not the slightest alteration of countenance.

"What is your name?" asked The Badger.

"Dan Croydon," said the other.

He in turn was a little disappointed when no sign of recognition appeared on the face of this gloomy boy. For though Danny was now only thirty, he had been on the plains for the past half of that life, and through the last dozen years he had been spreading his reputation rapidly. It seemed hardly possible that there could be a Cheyenne who did not know of him. But he did not know the peculiar solitariness with which The Badger had been raised.

He presently had his own enlightenment concerning the identity of the little Cheyenne, however. White Hawk had been strictly ordered not to leave the horses, but now curiosity had proved too strong for his wolfish heart, and he had hurried up to trail his master. He appeared out of the dusk—a glimmering form, strangely gigantic, marvelous, and looking as the firelight touched it, purest white.

"Ah!" breathed Danny Croydon. "The White Hawk—and you are the famous boy of Red Eagle's band—you are The White Badger!"

I know that Danny has a way of throwing an immense cordiality into his voice, and these simple words, from him, must have sounded like a great tribute to The Badger.

He grunted, but he acknowledged the tribute by sitting down suddenly cross-legged, the muzzle of the Colt still carefully turned upon the white man. He spoke sharply to White Hawk—and the wolf dog trotted into the dark. He spoke again, and Croydon had the uncomfortable knowledge that a grown wolf squatted behind him, ready to break his neck at the word of his young master. It was apparent that The Badger knew this, also; for he laid his revolver aside and sighed with a bit of relief.

He was much intrigued by this white man. This was one unlike the whisky-vending traders whom he had seen hitherto. This was a face more akin to those other faces of white men which moved through a dim mist of his distant past—ghosts of faces, and ghosts of voices. Every year, now, his memory of that distant time was clearing, and two people in particular were standing out more and more brightly for him—Tommy Tucker and Rose Tucker—though still they were to the mind of this boy nothing more than undiscovered emotion, unseen mists and not faces at all. However, he recognized that in the man before him there was an entirely new type which was worthy of study, at least.

"Why do you look at me so hard?" asked Croydon, smiling.

"Because I wonder why I am not sitting on your back, sawing at your scalp," said the boy.

"If you'd meant that," said Croydon, "you would have crashed a bullet through my spine. No, there's no fear of that. But——"

Here he paused, for it seemed to him that there was something in the face of the youth which was worthy of more attention. Hitherto there had been thick shadow upon it, and Croydon had noticed only the long, black hair and the black, bright eyes, and the high cheek bones. As a matter of fact, The Badger was about as ugly as any Indian that I have ever seen, but here the fire tossed up a glow of light, and the first thing that Croydon found missing from the make-up of this "Indian" was the copper-red color in the skin! Then he looked closer and saw a certain delicacy in the curving of the lips and in the lean, square chin.

"By the heavens!" said Croydon.

"Stranger," said the boy, "I shall be rich with these packs and these horses."

"You will not take them," said Croydon.

"So?" said the boy, and grinned like a wolf.

"Does a man steal from his own tribesmen?"

"Are you a Cheyenne?" asked the boy, a little staggered, because indeed the Cheyenne tongue was perfect on the lips of Danny Croydon.

"I am white, and you are white," said Danny Croydon.

The boy sneered. "I am Cheyenne," he said. He grew a little excited, for the stinging thought was working under his skin. "I am all Cheyenne. My father and my mother are Cheyenne."

"Your real father and your real mother," said Danny Croydon, "were scalped and murdered by the Cheyennes."

It was a staggering way to put it. This truth smashed against the face of The Badger and made his head swim. Of course Danny was only guessing, but it was not hard to guess, now that he had noticed the truth. This boy was all white! His eyes, and something nameless in the quality of his voice showed his blood.

"Did you see them scalped and killed?" asked the boy.

But Croydon countered: "Did your mother give you to the Cheyennes for nothing—for a song? Do white people sell their children to the Cheyennes?"

"Much talk is truly bad," said The Badger.

He was beginning to grow very sick in the pit of the stomach.

"I am all Cheyenne!" said he, but his voice was only a gasp.

Croydon merely smiled, and he saw a glint of tragedy in the face of the boy. His own smile went out. He began to be sorry.

"You are all Cheyenne while you're a boy," he admitted to The Badger. "But after a little while The Badger will be a man. Unless the Pawnees get him first. And Standing Elk will try his best, eh?"

"You have heard even of that?"

"I have heard."

"You have made me sad. If I had pulled the trigger, you would not have been alive to talk to me!"

"You could not pull the trigger, you see, because a white man cannot shoot from behind without a warning. It is not fair!"

"Ah!" cried The Badger. "*You* understand!"

"I do. And not a Cheyenne in all

"I do. And not a Cheyenne in all your tribe could tell you why you could

"No!" sighed the boy. "They could not tell!"

"I can take you, White Badger, where thousands of men will understand because they feel just the same way about

it that you do. Will you come with me?"

"I go to see Black Antelope and hear him talk. Because I did not stab Standing Elk."

"You had a chance to do that? I thought Clouded Sky was your man?"

"I took the scalp of Clouded Sky," said the boy, and he struck his chest. "By the edge of the water, I saw him with the lights of the lodges——"

Croydon appeared to recognize the tone of this narrative, for he br ke in suddenly:

"Very well! You killed Clouded Sky and then you came on Standing Elk."

"Before his lodge—by chance. He turned around, and there was my knife at his breast. But Tirawa caught my arm by the elbow and held it and I could not strike!"

The face of Danny Croydon must have lighted then.

"Good boy!" said he. "Will you come with me, White Badger? Will you go back to your own people with me? You shall have half of my packs, and they are filled with the finest furs. There will be a little fortune in your half of the stuff!"

"It is all mine if I wish to speak with this," said the insolent boy, and he touched the gun beside him, "or if I speak to the dog. It would all be mine, then."

"You could not do it, White Badger," said Croydon. "I have never harmed you. I have traded fair with the Indians, or else I trap my own furs. You could not rob me, my friend. Tirawa would chase you with thunder. But if you will go with me, you will be a brother to me, Badger. And half of what I have shall be yours—and there will be a way to fix you up with schools. You will learn something."

"Why should I leave my people?" said the boy. And he stood up suddenly and moved a long step back into the encircling darkness.

"Because they are *not* your people. They've murdered your people, White Badger. Get the truth out of them!"

"I am all Cheyenne in my heart!" groaned The Badger.

"If you were Cheyenne, my scalp would be at your belt, and you would have my packs spread open!"

"Ah," sighed the boy, "I wish that I had never seen you!"

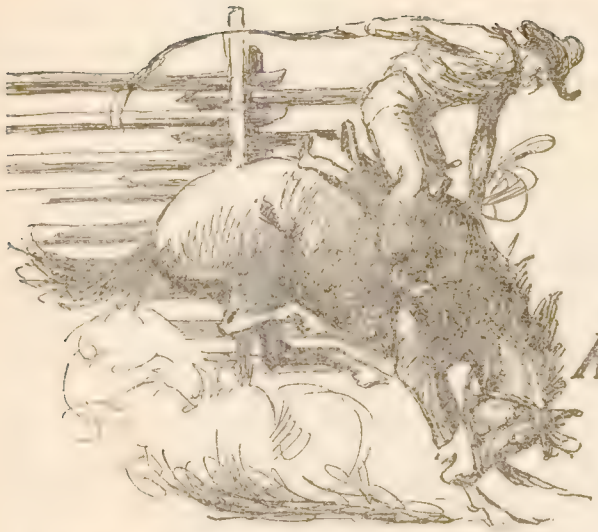
"You cannot help hearing me, White Badger, and if you steal away now, it is because you are afraid of meeting the truth about yourself! Is that true?"

"It is a great lie!" cried The Badger angrily.

"You will never forget what I say. Listen to me, White Badger. For I know! The day will come, sooner or later, when you will strap your pack behind your saddle and come riding to me or to other white men. You will wash the paint off your face and come to us. And I hope by your God and mine, White Badger, that when that time comes, there is the blood of no white man on your hands. For if there is, then the line is drawn, lad. Remember! You could never come back to your own kind then."

But The White Badger, with a sort of frightened moan, had fled into the dark of the night, and the wolf dog had whisked after him.

To be continued in next week's issue of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE



Some Good

By

Ray Humphreys

Author of "With a Head Start," etc.

HE had come in with the home bunch, unaware of the fact that the remuda was leading him behind high, confining corral fences from whence escape, for even such as he, was impossible. Magnificent, fiery-eyed, his golden-chestnut body glistening in the sun, his creamy mane and tail flying on the breeze, he trotted confidently along with the somber brood mares and rope ponies, and Bill Galvin, who was minding the corral gate, hardly breathed until the mighty horse had passed safely and unsuspectingly through. Then Bill slammed the gate tight on the prize and sloped for the ranch house as fast as his awkward boots would let him.

"Jumping jack rabbits!" whooped Bill, as he ran. "Ef that ain't the keenest hoss I ever seen in San Miguel County! An' he's a wild un, too, bet my hat! Walked into the trap just as easy as yuh please, an' me crouchin' down behind the gate, scared to breathe after I seen him comin'—oh, laws!"

At the ranch house Bill skidded to an abrupt halt, swept his dusty old sombrero off his head, and bowed low, panting and flushing under his tan.

"'Scuse me, missy, fer excitin' yuh," began Bill uneasily. "I was jus' yellin'——"

"I should say you were!" retorted the girl, who had appeared on the ranch porch so suddenly to end Bill's flight and uproar. "I thought the barns must be on fire, or the milk herd stampeded or something! Now what *is* the matter?"

Bill pressed his hat to his chest. "Missy Belle! Yuh just oughter see what I got in the hoss corral! Sunshine himself, that's all! He jus' comes trottin' in with the bunch, an' I lets him slip through the gate an' then I slams it—I ain't never seen nuthin' like him. No man, not in San Miguel County—not in Coloraday."

By this time the girl had been joined on the porch by two men, who had come curiously from the house at Bill's excited exclamations. One was Phil Evans, owner of the Two Pines Rancho and father of the golden-haired girl that was the pride of all San Miguel; the other was "Bud" Stewart, the ranch foreman, tall, rawboned.

"Branded?" interrupted the rancher eagerly, as he guessed at the significance of Bill's story.

"No," said Bill, putting his hat back on. "Missy Belle, I'll bet yuh'll like his color! An' boss, yuh'll——"

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"We'll take a look at him," said Evans, with a smile. "Ef an ol' hand like yuh, Bill, kin go crazy over a range hoss, he must be sure some hoss!"

And although Bill assured him that he was some horse, and got his tongue all tangled up trying to describe him, the rancher was not prepared for the sight that met his eyes when he peered cautiously through the bars of the horse corral. Neither was Belle Evans, nor Bud Stewart, the foreman. Even Bill Galvin, taking a good look for the first time now, gasped. The strange horse in the Two Pines corral was by far the finest animal any of the four persons now gazing at him, had even seen. Big, powerful, with a broad, intelligent head, and black, snapping eyes, the golden-hued horse towered about the ratty cow ponies like a monarch of his kind.

"Whew!" said the rancher respectfully, and then he shook his head slowly. "Thar ain't no hosses like *that* runnin' wild on the San Miguel range no more; that must be an escaped circus hoss, that's what! He looks like he's got plenty o' Arab blood in him ef I know hosses! Bud, that hoss is branded, and a stray, that's all—an' somebody will be searchin'——"

"He ain't branded," denied the foreman positively, straightening up. "He's been fidgetin' around so I got a good slant at him all over, an' he ain't got no mark on him! An' from the way them eyes o' his are takin' us in, I'll say he ain't no circus hoss! He ain't gentled! He's a dog-gone outlaw, that's what. An outlaw an' a stranger in these parts."

The rancher put his hat back on his head. "Bud, I'm thinkin' this feller came to the right place to be gentled! I'm aimin' to do it. With a hoss like that I kin ride inter Monte Vista or Alamosa or anywhere an' git more attention than ef I was ridin' five hosses all at once!

"If he ain't branded, I'm sure glad to hear it! He's part o' the Two Pine outfit right now, boys, an' we gotta make him feel at home. Bill, when yuh closed the gate on him, yuh did a good day's work! Belle, what do yuh think o' him?"

The girl clasped her hands in admiration. "Oh, dad, he's perfectly glorious! Look at that mane and tail! An' he can't be mean, with that wise ol' head on him!"

The foreman chuckled. "Wise ol' head—yes," he remarked; "full o' all kinds o' devilment. That's the kind o' outlaw that alwus is a outlaw. I've seen wonder hosses before like him!"

Then, for several days, the great yellow horse was the cynosure of all eyes on the Two Pines Ranch. A special guard was maintained at the gate to prevent any attempt on the part of the stranger to depart, as he had come, whenever any of the boys entered the corral for a mount. And while the big fellow was admired, he was feared, too, for he had early demonstrated the truth of the foreman's words. He was mean. He squealed if a man entered the corral, and bared teeth and gave every indication of being particularly vicious and fearless. There was no brand on him. Jim Carruthers and the older heads in the bunk house declared that he must have drifted down from the Pike, where large droves of wild horses still flourished.

"Something or somebody flushed him outta the Pike," was the way Carruthers put it, "and he ran mad an' got lost. Then he got lonesome. When he seen our remuda, he joined up. An' he was so glad to be back with friends ag'in that he walked blind inter the corral, like as not never realizin' what it was, havin' had no experience with such things. He's a good looker, but pshaw! I ain't the one hankerin' to gentle him!"

To Belle Evans, however, the wonder horse that had strayed in with the home bunch was something more than a mere prize of the wilderness. Repelling her

advances at first, he had finally charged the corral bars determinedly, as though minded to frighten the slip of a girl away, but she had not retreated. She knew what he did not know, apparently, that the fence was stout and safe. Twice the golden animal tried his bluff, hurling his massive shoulders against the bars without avail. The next day he took a lump of sugar from her hand as daintily as any colt might. After that he did not squeal at her approach, nor bare his teeth and flatten his ears back along his glossy, arched neck. And while Belle was winning his confidence, the horse was the subject of much talk at the rancho.

"To-morrow," said the rancher one evening, "I'm goin' to straddle that yaller devil! I reckon I'd best to try it in the corral, too, jus' to be sure he doesn't git away. We ain't got no hoss could overtake him, lest'n it be Judy, and I doubt ef she could. An' anyway, she's out on grass. I'll ride him, an' later we'll brand him nice an' proper!"

"Dad!" spoke up the girl impulsively. "That wouldn't be right! Ruin that glossy skin with a nasty, scrawlin' ol' Two Pine brand—the meanest brand in San Miguel? It would be a shame! We'd know him anywhere, anyway."

"Yes, an' most any hoss thief would wanta know him better on first sight!" laughed Evans, patting Belle on the shoulder. "He's got to be identified as Two Pines property—but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll have the blacksmith at Monte make up a special small Two Pines brand for him—one that won't be too conspicuous like our reg'lar irons!"

The word that Phil Evans had designs on the "pick-up" wonder horse and meant to ride him, spread like wildfire up and down the Platte, so that riders from distant ranches came dropping by the Two Pines shortly after sunup the next day. And as these newcomers, one by one, in pairs and in groups, looked through the corral bars at the yellow horse, they stared in admiration.

Wonder horse? Yes, all that and a lot more. Not a rider but who would have given his month's salary to put his bridle on *that* horse. They congratulated Phil Evans and invited themselves to stay for the "doin's," and that pleased Phil, who was proud of his prowess as a bronc buster.

"Yuh remember ol' Thad Sowder, who was the greatest buster of 'em all down Denver way a decade ago?" asked Evans, and at affirmative nods he went on: "Waal, I think I'm next best, but I aim to tell yuh boys right now that I'm climbin' a tough nut this time. That yaller devil is no fool, and look at them muscles! He'll put *power* behind his stuff!"

The audience, all being horsemen, knew that without being told, and they did not argue with Phil. Instead, they climbed up on top of the corral fences, where they could watch the battle with ease and safety. The wonder horse saw the line-up and seemed to sense that his hour had come. He laid his ears along his neck.

"Phil, yuh be careful," said Bob Dill, as he saw this. "The ol' boy knows what's a-comin' off right now!"

"Sure, he's smart!" said Phil.

Five minutes later, after Belle Evans had pleaded with her father to be careful and not to enrage the golden horse more than was necessary, Phil Evans entered the corral. Bill Galvin, Bud Stewart, and Jim Carruthers trailed him in, each with a ready rope. The boss threw first, and as the noose settled down over the magnificent one's head, it reared, wheeled, and lurched, but a lucky toss from Galvin caught him by a front leg, and he came back to earth. In the twinkling of an eye another rope had descended, and in a minute the big horse was securely anchored as only the riders of the Two Pines knew how to do it!

"Ain't puttin' up a heck of a lot o' fuss!" said Joe Myers, a bit disappointedly. "Mebbe he ain't an outlaw!"

There was a general laugh around at that remark.

"Oh, no, he ain't no outlaw!" sung out Jodey Bennett, a rancher from Midway. "He's just a rockin'-hoss fer the children! But yuh watch him! I'm bettin' he's just savin' his strength fer the tussle he knows is comin'. He's smart He can't fight half a dozen ropes! But——"

They got him saddled at last, after they had passed a gunny sack under the halter and over his eyes, and had thus quieted him to some extent. But he winced as they heaved on the saddle, and he shuddered as they tightened the cinches, and he crouched low, like a tawny puma, as he felt the weight of the man in the stirrup. He went still lower when Evans settled in the saddle. Then the helpers sprang back, some one jerked the gunny sack off his eyes, and the sun came back to him and it was daylight again and there was a man on his back. The railbirds held their breaths.

"Scratch him, Phil!" came a cry, wafting across the corral, and that was the magic word that released things.

Phil had no time to scratch, even though he had a mind to do that very thing. At the yell, which sounded like thunder on the deathly quiet of the afternoon, the yellow horse went straight up into the air in a wonderful leap that was more of a great jump than a buck. But when he settled he came down with a tremendous thud, all four feet spread apart. Then he switched ends so quickly that Phil's neck snapped and the audience caught its breath sharply. The next moment the yellow brute had reared on its hind legs and bluffed a somersault, backward, only to come down on all four feet the moment he felt the sting of the sharp spurs.

Down again, but not for long. Another mad plunge, and then he sank his head between his forelegs and thrashed out at the sky with his hind hoofs. But Phil Evans stuck, and had not yet pulled leather. He was riding a powerful outlaw, but not a particularly educated one. So far the horse had not pulled anything than what Phil had expected. He was taking swift, sudden jerks across the corral now, head down, apparently oblivious to the heavy fence ahead. The crowd held its breath again, and Belle shuddered.

"The fence," she whispered to Gus Withers, who sat beside her on the top rail, but Withers reassured her.

"He won't bust hisself on no fence!" said Withers.

Hardly had Withers spoken, though, when the yellow flash reached the fence. Apparently he sensed it, or saw it, just a fraction too late to check his mad career. But he went straight up, as though he meant to climb it, whirled half around, tottered, then fell over backward against the fence, smashing his rider between himself and the fence, and eventually sprawling down, half on his side, half on his back, with his unconscious rider wedged beneath and back of him.

For a moment there was no movement or sound, and then men leaped from the fence. Bud Stewart, the foreman, was first, and he immediately fell on the yellow horse's head and pressed the head to earth. Other men, skillfully dodging the flying hoofs, closed in. A loop was dropped over a flashing hoof. Some one seized the tail, others the saddle straps, and thus they pulled the battered form of Phil Evans out from under the living death that had pinned him to earth, in a corner of the fence corral. Phil was white, crumpled, and senseless, but still breathing when they lifted him away.

"I'll kill this dog-gone devil now," cried the foreman impulsively, and he

jerked his six-gun from his holster, but a hand fell on his arm, and for just the fraction of a second Belle had her face close to the foreman's.

"Don't do it, Bud! I forbid it! Dad wouldn't allow it! Yuh can't blame the hoss! Let him be!"

Then she was gone, crying and wringing her hands, after the five men who were bearing the unconscious form of her crushed father to the house. The foreman holstered his gun. Jim Carruthers dragged the saddle from the fallen outlaw. Bill Galvin loosed the ropes—and the golden horse got up painfully, dazed. He was alone again. The last of his tormentors was just closing the corral gates. The horse rushed them, but too late.

That evening, when the rancher had come to, after the hastily summoned surgeon from Monte had set the broken leg, Belle pleaded for the life of the yellow horse.

"Bud says he's goin' to kill him," she said slowly, "and I knew you wouldn't wish that, dad, bad as he has hurt you. It's lucky he didn't kill you. But he didn't know. I don't want Bud to shoot him."

"He's a danged outlaw!" said Bud viciously, "an' he oughter be shot. Yuh never kin gentle him, boss!"

"No," said the rancher weakly, "he's a bad un, Bud! He's an outlaw through an' through. He's worthless——"

The girl pressed closer to the bed where the injured rancher rested.

"Dad, don't let them kill him," she whispered. "There may be some good in him after all—even if——"

"All right, sis," said Evans.

A broken leg on a mature man heals but slowly, and Phil Evans' leg was no exception to the general rule. And the rancher was impatient, as the broken bones slowly knitted, for it was his busy season, and he could ill afford to lie flat on his back while his men rode the range without his direction. The Two Pines was a big ranch, with huge tracts of leased lands and forest reserves bordering it, and it was well stocked with cattle, so that constant vigilance was required to see that the herds did not stray back into the hills or trespass on the lands of other ranchers.

"Jus' to think," said Evans bitterly to Belle one day a week after the golden outlaw had fallen upon him, "that I let a tramp hoss like that put me away for the summer when I oughter to be out with the boys on the range. I should oughter let Bud shoot him, like he wanted to, an' paid the critter back fer his meanness. Thar he is, out thar eatin' his head off in the corral, and that's all!"

"Dad," said the girl, and her voice shook, for she knew the suffering her father had undergone, "let him live. He didn't mean to do that, I'm sure. He saw the fence too late, and tried to avoid it. There may be some good in him, who knows, and he's so pretty."

"Jus' the way with gals," said Evans; "they see a good-lookin' hoss or a good-lookin' man, and they is for him from that moment on, no matter ef the hoss or man is a scoundrel! Good looks is all that counts!"

The girl laughed. And later, when her father had dropped off into a doze, she went out, with two lumps of sugar, for the handsome fellow in the corral. He whinnied as she approached. And he took the sugar greedily. He was alone in the corral and restless. Belle watched him for some minutes, then went back to the house, to find Evans awake.

"Been admirin' your pet?" asked the rancher, and Belle nodded.

"He's lonesome," she said. "He's alone for the first time since he's been here. The boys have taken every last hoss on the place except the mares an' colts, an' they're loose an' out o' sight, so Sunshine is lonesome."

The rancher snorted. "Mebbe it would be best to let him go, too, an' be shot of him for good," said Evans, "fer ef he stays on here, somebody is sure goin' to be tempted to ride him ag'in, an' we'll have more grief on our hands!"

What the girl would have answered to that was problematical. She had no time to answer. A whinny from the corral warned her of the approach of some one, and the next minute the shadow of a man dropped across the floor. Then the stranger stepped inside.

In one hand the man held a revolver.

"Howdy," he said pleasantly, nodding to Belle, who drew back in fright. "I don't aim to hurt yuh or anybody so long as I gets what I'm after."

"Who are yuh?" cried the rancher, getting up on an elbow, but the intruder halted him right there.

"Don't try goin' after no gun if you got one under that pillow," he warned swiftly. "An' no questions, either. I'm doin' the questionin' here!"

He glanced around the room as though seeking something. Belle noticed that he looked haggard and worn, and that his clothes were tattered and dirty. His boots were badly used, and his eyes were feverish. He turned again to the rancher.

"Didn't I see the cashier o' the Monte Vista bank come ridin' in here yesterday an' then go away ag'in?"

Evans shrugged his shoulders. "How do I know what yuh saw?"

"Well, I'm askin'," went on the gunman quickly, "an' I'm askin' also didn't he leave yuh the money fer yuhr pay roll? To-morrow's the first, isn't it? I sneaked up an' overheard some o' the boys at the corral las' night mention that to-morrow was pay day an' that the cashier had brought yuh in the dough, seein' yuh couldn't go in after it yuhrself."

"Yuh seem to know it all," said Evans.

Meanwhile Belle had slipped to a window and glanced out, hoping to see some of the boys coming in, but it was still early in the day and too soon to expect any but a chance rider. The bandit saw her and swung his gun around.

"Sister, yuh stand still! I come fer that pay-roll money, an' I'm goin' to get it without no interruptions, or I'll start the fireworks, much as I hates to shoot a sick man. Where's that dough?"

The rancher set his lips tight, but the gunman was not watching him. He was watching Belle, and the swift, inadvertent glance she shot at the cupboard, on the far wall, told him all he wanted to know.

"Thanks," he muttered excitedly, and he strode toward the cupboard, keeping an eye on his prisoners as he did so. He yanked the door open, took a swift glance, saw the pouch of money, seized it, and backed away.

"Easy," he admitted, as he reached the door, hesitating on the threshold for a minute.

"I wouldn't try to foller," he advised hastily, "for I'm goin' pronto. And I'm helpin' myself to a hoss, too, seein' I have none of my own. Adios!"

"Belle," cried the rancher furiously, "run into the front room an' get that Winchester. Yuh can plug him from the winder. Thar's nine hundred dollars in that sack, an'—— But hold on, kin yuh see him—is he makin' fer the corral?"

"He sure is!" said Belle.

The rancher settled back on the pillow. "Leave the rifle be, sis," he said. "Let that yeller outlaw finish him. Mebbe thar's some good in that hoss, as yuh say. Ef he plays true to form, now, I'll pension him. Tell me——"

Belle, at the window, seemed frozen, so motionless and tense was she. Outside, in the corral, the bandit was approaching the yellow outlaw, which was standing waiting for him with legs planted wide apart and nostrils quivering. The girl put her hand over her eyes for a moment.

"Tell me," cried the rancher, "is he in the corral yet? Is the outlaw makin' fer him, sis—tell me——"

The girl looked again, swaying slightly, and then her face paled. She leaned against the window sill, her eyes wide. A minute she stood thus, and then she turned to Evans and spoke rapidly.

"The feller's in the corral. He's got a saddle on that hoss. The hoss is standin' still—actin' funny——"

"Just savin' hisself," said the rancher, "like he did with me. He'll kill that feller——"

The girl, looking out the window, gasped. Then she turned again to the injured man on the bed.

"Dad—he's opened the gate an' he's ridin' out—an' that hoss ain't makin' no ruckus at all!"

"What?"

"Yep, he's gettin' away on him!"

"Git that rifle I spoke of—quick!"

But Belle paid no attention to Evans' order this time. Instead, she ran out into the yard, and the bandit, turning in his saddle, waved jauntily to her. The yellow horse was galloping now, smoothly, without the slightest show of resistance to the will of his rider!

Down the meadow road went the bandit, across the creek, and up into the timber beyond.

"Good in that yeller hoss!" raged Evans. "Oh, yes! When he has a chance to make good—he doesn't!"

Belle hesitated only a moment. Then, without going back to tell her father her plans, she ran to the barns, in the vain hope that perhaps, after all, there might be a horse there. And there was. In a far stall, munching contently, was a pony—an old rope pony that one of the boys was fattening up a little preparatory to taking it to Monte to sell it. In a minute Belle had saddled it and in another minute she was flying up the meadow road, heading for the point where she thought she might find some of the Two Pines riders.

Forty minutes later she was telling Bill Galvin and Jack Carberry all about it. Forty-one minutes later the three of them were galloping along the high ridge, bent on overtaking the bandit on the golden horse.

It was a hard ride, but Bill knew the short cuts and had guessed right as to the direction the bandit was taking. The three riders came out on a grassy plain just at sundown, to see the yellow horse and his rider flashing across the plain.

"Cut in on him," roared Bill wildly, "or we don't connect! That hoss can outrun anything we got! I'll shoot him down in a minnit."

"You'll not," cried the girl. "We'll take him and his man alive."

Suddenly she pulled in her pony, raised up in her stirrups, and whistled shrilly—once—twice—thrice.

Then a miracle happened. The yellow horse slowed up, hesitated, halted. Again the girl whistled, while the bandit struck the horse with his hat. It moved on, but stopped, and Belle and her men bore down on it.

A rope whistled, and the man on the yellow horse knew that resistance against such odds was useless.

"I'll trouble you for our money back," she said simply.

"How in holy smoke did *yuh* gentle that yeller hoss?" he demanded, as he worked up, along his rope to the bandit.

"Huh," said the gunman. "He's my own hoss. I just stole him back. He got away from me in the timber a while ago, where I was hidin' out waitin' to pull this job."

"That yaller devil," said Bill, glaring at the wonder hoss. "I thought he was a outlaw, sure enough."

"I told you there was some good in him," said Belle triumphantly, as she watched Bill trussing up his man. "He stopped when I whistled! I guess I didn't feed him sugar and whistle to him every day for nothin'."

Kitty Gets Her Ride

By

Cherry Wilson

Author of "He Come, He Saw, He Beat It," etc.

"NO calamity," gloomed "All-in" Lappin, one of the ultra-blue cowboys of Triangle Z, waiting on the tail end of that impatient line before the fair-ground gate, "no calamity beats bein' busted on derby day!"

"Wishful" Dixon groaned. Into his feverish eyes, fixed on the dusty road leading back to Gunsight, leaped an even wilder light.

"I s'pose not!" he flared with bitter irony. "I s'pose 'tain't wuss—bein' in the same fix an' slated to take a gal!"

"Thet ain't calamity—it's imbecility," All-in commented thoughtlessly. "No hombre, lessen he's loco, wants to drag wimmin folks——"

"I don't wanta—*I hafta!*" Wishful was stung into hysterical self-vindication. "You know mighty well this ol' gal wuz wisht onta me! When she come back to stay with Julia Lee over derby day, Julia an' Cahlina schemed it up I wuz to take her offa their hands. The fust I knowed, Cahlina told me she'd accepted—las' night after I come home broke. Why, even if I *had* money, you don't reckon I'd ast a gal? But I got one anyhow, an' she'll be here, pronto! How'm I to git her in the grounds when it costs four bits a head to git in, an' I'll hev two heads an' not one cent to my——"

"Which I can't help none," interposed All-in with genuine regret. "Ma gosh, if 'twarn't I wuz to groom Pat Howe's racers fer him, I wouldn't git in a-tall!"

"An' jist the fact I'm a performer gits me past the gate," grumbled "Dimples" McFee, second entrant in the bull-dogging contest scheduled for two o'clock. "Though how I kin perform agin' a jinx, beats me. An' ol' Triangle Z's shore jinxed, if ever an outfit wuz."

A remark certainly justified by past events. For in the two days of the stampede gone by, Triangle Z, the star ranch of the Grande Ronde, had been beaten in every field by her bitterest rival, Lazy K. Since the boys, with fanatical loyalty, had backed their entries to the utmost extent of both capital and credit, this morning found them hopelessly blue and broke. Most blue, as absolutely broke, was Wishful Dixon.

At nine the gate would swing on the last and biggest day of the Grande Ronde Rodeo. And any time, now, Cahlina and Julia Lee would come down that road, piloting Kitty O'Neil with the express purpose of turning her over to him—*outside* the gate. Restrained from flight only by a dogged sense of duty, the indigent puncher groaned

afresh. How was he to put up for a girl a whole day at a rodeo? How was he even to get her past that gate?

"Oh, Lordy!" he moaned, his eyes still glued to the highway. "I got jist one measly chancet—if Cahlina's had any luck borrowin', he'll divvy up with me."

"What yuh need," declared old "Dad" McKeen, fingering the sheriff's badge on his cowhide vest, "is gumption. Did I sit supine an' bewail my broken lot? No siree! I dusted aroun' an' got myself made an extry deputy, so's I could see the show. If'n you wuz shifty like the rest of us yuh'd git Kitty in!"

"Holy cow!" ejaculated the tormented youth. "D'ja expect me to ast thet gal to bulldog a steer, curry racers, or round up rowdies to pay her fare? Oh, Lordy," as torturing memories stirred, "recollect how I counted on this day fer months! They's goin' to be a airyplane an'——"

In a veritable panic Wishful leaped to his feet. Down the road swiftly moved a drabbish streak between one of scarlet and another of white. Instinct warned him that the scarlet streak was Kitty O'Neil! Before the primitive urge of self-preservation, sense of duty went glimmering.

"Oh, Lordy!" he blithered, whirling for flight. "Tell her I took a cramp! Tell her——"

But Dad McKeen, nabbing the distracted cowboy with an agility that augured well for the future efficiency of Sheriff Paxton's new deputy, admonished sternly:

"You stay hitched! What kind of a gazaboo be yuh, tryin' to ditch a purty leetle gal like thet? By dern, yuh're goin' to squire her, if it's jist back to town! Besides," he added in a milder tone, "things ain't never so bad as yuhr fancy paints 'em. Admission entitles yuh to see the races; thar's heaps of sights to show Kitty what don't call fer no outlay of cash, an' the barbecue's free."

"B-but the admission?" gasped the condemned youth, submitting to his horrible fate.

"The Lord'll pervide," said orthodox old Dad.

Now blond, little blue-eyed Kitty O'Neil, in her summery scarlet frock, was most decidedly not a girl from whom normal young men ran. But Wishful was scarcely normal. Merely to be seen with a girl would have embarrassed the skirt-shy cowboy under prosperous circumstances. But to have one on his hands and nothing in his pockets was a plight too appalling for coherent thought.

Nevertheless, he babbled some greeting to the girls, smiled wanly, and this heroic feat accomplished, seized Cahlina's arm, fiercely dragging him aside.

"Cahlina," was his agonized whisper, "did yuh make a raise?"

"Wishful," the big cowboy drawled earnestly, "it shuah ain't my fault thet I didn't. I'd be suhtinly stumped to git Julia in, only thet I found a dollah in an' ol' coat what I'd plumb ovahlooked."

"Then," blurted Wishful desperately, "here's where I beat it! Danged if I'll be showed up fer a piker afore a gal!"

"Pardnah," protested Cahlina piteously, "don't you do me dirt. Julia won't turn me down for bein' broke, but she'll shuah give me the go-by if you slight her friend. Stall around till Webb Martin shows up. He'll loan you ten, for Lazy K won all the cash we had. If I see Webb, I'll send him to——"

"Hoo-hoo, Wishful!" shrieked Kitty. "Hurry up, the gate's open!"

Gently, inexorably, the dazed and penniless cavalier was propelled on the heels of that mob now slowly filing into the fair ground. His mind was benumbed to all save the one stark fact—tickets cost money. He must see Webb

Martin—see him in the twenty feet yet remaining between himself and the ticket window. Toward this end he frantically twisted his neck this way and that to the mystification of his fair companion.

"Looking for some one, Wishful?" Kitty asked.

"Yeah, Webb Martin," the youth answered tonelessly.

"Well, believe me, I'm not!" she declared, girlishly confidential. "Webb used to be my beau when I lived here. When he heard I was back for derby day, he rode over to Lee's, asking to take me to the rodeo. But Julia thought——"

"Looky here," cried Wishful with frenzied earnestness. "I don't wanta butt in on Webb. Nobody but a kiyote busts up a love match. Say the word an' I'll pull my freight an' fix it up with Webb."

A silvery peal of laughter interrupted. "Good gracious, don't take it so serious," gurgled Kitty. "I don't!"

It was worse than serious to Wishful. That line had dwindled to ten—eight—six. In a moment of exquisite mental anguish he stood before the little wicket—and cast one despairing look into the promised land.

"How many?" came the stereotyped query of the man behind.

Wishful, feeling the girl's wondering eyes on him, was determined to ward off till the last possible second the shameful dénouement.

"Two," he mumbled thickly.

With terrifying alacrity, twin blue slips came sliding under his fascinated gaze. With fine beads of perspiration on his brow, Wishful went through the sham of searching empty pockets.

"I—I," he shuttered. "I—my——"

"*Hyar!*" roared a six-cylinder voice, the unique property of Sheriff Jerry Paxton. "You folks what's in, stay in! You, on the outside, git in! Let nobody out this gate, boys, till I say the word!"

Ere this startling command was fairly uttered Wishful, who had spent agonized ages contemplating that gate, was pitched headfirst through it, to pick himself out of the dust just as it clanged noisily to, with Kitty beside him, and, also, the grinning cause of his sudden and free admission—the extra deputy, old Dad McKeen.

"Yuh didn't hev to boost me halfway to Tucson!" protested Wishful angrily, applying a cerise bandanna to his begrimed face and attire. "Couldn't yuh show a leetle moderation?"

"By dern, yuh're a grateful cuss!" Dad was righteously incensed. "Yuh howled enough 'bout gittin' in, an' I got yuh in. Now yuh howl about *how* yuh got in! The minit I seed my chancet, I——"

"What's the ruckus?" Wishful had a dim memory of wild commotion other than of his own making.

"Ruckus a-plenty!" returned Dad excitedly. "Some yahoo's swiped the rodeo money! Two days' gate receipts—clost to five thousand bucks. They kept it in the safe in Steve Prouty's office under the grand stand, with Steve on guard. Along toward mornin' two jaspers raps Steve over the dome, gags'n hog ties him, and makes off with the bootie."

"Got a hunch who?" asked Wishful tensely.

"By dern, we *know* who! Steve warn't nigh so knocked out as he lets on. The big feller's hat slips, an' Steve saw 'twuz a red-ha'red——"

"'Red' Rouse!" cried Wishful, amazed.

"Sartin shore. An' he ain't beat it, nuther. Fer Steve heard him chucklin' to his pal, 'bout how Jerry'd hev his nose on the ground fer a week, huntin' tracks which they warn't makin' an' how the safest place in the county to-day ud be right in the crowd. So Jerry orders the gate shut till we gives the crowd the oncet-over. Red can't disguise thet

hair none. Wishful, if we kin jist nab Red, it'll be a heap bigger feather in Triangle Z's cap'n winnin' races an' sich!"

A delicate cough reminded Wishful of his lovely partner.

"Dad," he said bitterly, "it's up to you. Jist when they's real doin's, an' a show to cover Triangle Z with glory, it's my danged luck to be tethered onta a gal's apern strings!"

Resentfully, awkwardly, Wishful took Kitty's arm and they mingled with the excited throng, now being sharply scrutinized by various limbs of the law. Much as Wishful longed to help Dad in an effort to win back the old standing of Triangle Z, he was soon forced to forgo the thought—it requiring all his energy and wit to circumvent Kitty's impulses for reckless expenditure and keep from her knowledge the extent of his pauperism. This necessitated a show of miserliness that was repugnant to his generous nature.

He had hoped, on first finding himself so unexpectedly within the grounds, that he might bluff it out after all. As Dad declared—the races, sights, and barbecue were free. But disillusionment was speedy. The hot dog, pop corn, and candy stands were so many magnets to draw her little feet. The jewelry, curio, and Navajo-blanket booths elicited covetous "Ohs" and "Ahs." No—it would take money to travel with Kitty.

Wildly he craned neck and vision for sight of Webb Martin. If he could see Webb—then, with relief poignant to the extent of pain, he saw him, and with a brief "'Scuse me!" to Kitty, dived at the cowboy from Lazy K.

"Webb," and it was more a prayer than request, "Webb, kin yuh loan me ten?"

Webb grinned derisively.

"Say, you must think I got rats in my belfry—stakin' you to festivate my gal!"

"If—if she's yuhr gal," Wishful fervently pleaded, "fer Pete's sake—take her!"

"Fat chance!" Webb's grin broadened. "She thinks she ain't my gal, an' I aim to learn her better. If you Triangle Z hombres is so blamed hard up, why don't you round up Red Rouse? I hear the rodeo committee's offerin' five hundred."

This slam on his outfit got a rise out of Wishful.

"If Triangle Z can't," he flashed with the last flicker of spirit, "Lazy K better not try!"

Kitty was not where he had left her, but his joy in having lost her was quickly dashed. She stood, hands clasped, blue eyes dreamy, exclaiming rapturously before a booth near by.

Surprised, Wishful sized up that booth, one he had passed many times yesterday. Certainly there was nothing worth exclaiming about. Merely a game of chance—where one threw balls at a runty gentleman of chocolate hue for devilish-looking dolls. The only striking thing about it was the woman who owned and "barked" for it—a whooping big female in a green linen dress with a felt hat—from beneath which straggled locks of coarse black hair, pulled low over a face surprisingly red and hard.

"Oh-h-h!" Kitty exclaimed in his ear. "Ain't that the darlin'est, cuddli'est, littel sweetums? The pink one up there—with all those sparkly spangles on her dress?"

Wishful tried to hide his disgust. All that fuss about a doll! "Uh-huh," he grunted noncommittally.

"Step up, gents," bawled the lady behind the counter in a foghorn voice. "Don't be shy. Spend yuhr money fer a baa-by doll. Three balls——"

Something in her tone or aspect tickled Wishful's partner. "Ain't she funny?" giggled Kitty, clinging to him. "Ain't she a perfect scream?"

"Thet's Madame Estelle," volunteered Wishful, devoutly thankful that something had detracted Kitty's mind from the pink kewpie. "I reckon hollerin' so much makes her hoarse."

"You said it!" bellowed madame, overhearing this remark. "It's hollerin' at guys like you what makes me hoarse. Speed up—whilst I still kin whinny. Three balls fer a quar-tah! Throw them at Sam-bo! Win a kew-pie doll!"

Still none of the spectators showed any inclination to break the ice. Sambo, head poked through the hole in a large canvas screen, was visibly bored.

"Make yuhr sweetie happy!" entreated madame in a sing-song chant. "Gals like dolls. Git yuhr balls. Three fer a quar-tah. We never ask more. Throw them at Sam-bo! Thank you, sir," she said, doling out balls to a puncher who had evinced a desire to take a chance.

"Oh-h," breathed Kitty, as after two score of throws the cowboy made connections with Sambo's head. "I'll just die if he picks *my* kewpie!"

He didn't! Sighing with relief, Kitty turned expectantly to Wishful. If she was to retain her self-respect, she must have that pink kewpie. Such trophies were the outward symbols of your escort's affluence and esteem.

"Yuh're too big to play with dolls," Wishful said, adopting an indulgent tone, though he wanted, frightfully, to supply her with one. She was showing him up to the whole crowd.

Kitty sniffed.

"A kewpie ain't a doll!"

It was doubtless because he was so painfully conscious of his empty pockets that Wishful chose that moment to thrust his hands into them. To his unspeakable dismay, he saw the girl's face brighten.

"Oh, Wishful," she sang out gleefully, "are you going to get it for——"

Whirr-r-r! Whirr-r! A droning, as of a gigantic mosquito, overhead.

Instantly reminded of what had been to him the greatest attraction of the day, Wishful seized her arm.

"C'mon!" he yelled eagerly. "Le's go see the airyplane!"

Evidently many were inspired with the same idea, for when they raced to where the airplane had landed—the pink kewpie temporarily displaced in Kitty's mind—a large crowd was already about it, examining its parts, hectoring the aviator with a hodgepodge of questions, which he attempted to answer and at the same time jot names and dates in a little red book.

"Gee!" said Wishful, watching him enviously. "Thet guy's gotta lot better job'n punchin' cows."

"You bet!" Kitty was all enthusiasm. "I know—for I had a ride once. It's the thrillin'est thing! You soar away—just like a bird. I'd rather airplane than eat. Why, I can't hardly see a machine without feeling like I'd simply *die* if I couldn't go up! Were you ever up in the air, Wishful?"

"Yep! Right now. I mean—no!" stuttered the wretched boy, staggered by realization that he had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. It was plain that she'd set her heart on flying, as hard as she had on the pink kewpie. Well, she had as much chance of doing one as of getting the other. But he could understand her wanting to fly. Lordy, but he'd like to go up, too! How much was it—an airplane ride? Whatever it was—he didn't have it. Still, it didn't cost anything to ask.

"How—how much?" he made timid inquiry.

"Five per," was the astounding reply.

Kitty clapped her hands with pure delight. "Oh, Wishful, you don't mean you're going to take me up?"

Something snapped in the cowboy's brain. "Shore!" he babbled like a maniac. "Shore—a dozen times, if you say so. We'll jump right in, an' soar off like a coupla——"

"Not now, you don't," struck in the aviator. "There's a crowd ahead of you. But," he added, recording the names that Kitty joyfully furnished, "be here at two—sharp. I can't hold places," and he whirled abruptly as some one tapped him on the shoulder from behind.

Sufficiently calmed by this blessed reprieve, Wishful noted with amazement that the tapper was no other than Sambo, of kewpie fame. What could Sambo and the aviator be whispering about? Was Sambo going to fly?

Sharply reminded of his humiliating experience at Madame Estelle's, Wishful glanced at Kitty, who—now that the airplane ride was cinched—was gazing dreamily toward the biding place of her first love. Only the arrival of Cahlina and Julia, whom she must tell about the great treat in store, restrained her from rushing Wishful right back to the stand.

But Wishful had read that look. Kitty'd want that pink kewpie every time they passed that booth. They'd pass it a million times before the showdown at two. Some fiend had built it right so that it caught you coming or going. If he didn't want her to make a show of him, he'd have to get her that doll. But how? You threw balls for it. But first you had to buy the balls to throw. Even if you bought balls, you couldn't throw them now, for you threw them at Sambo, and Sambo was still talking to the—but inspiration seized Wishful Dixon!

"You stay with Julia till I come back!" he adjured Kitty; then he fled.

Before the idle booth numerous cowboys clamored for action. Madame Estelle gazed after the missing Sambo. On her brick-red features was an expression so sinisterly ferocious that Wishful's courage wavered. However, sight of the pink kewpie grinning ghoulishly down, brought to mind horrors infinitely more to be dreaded than madame's frown.

Scurrying around the booth, he stooped so that he was screened from eyes in front by Sambo's shield, and, stretching out a long arm, he plucked the hem of Madame Estelle's skirt.

"What the——" began that lady, startled into a three-foot jump.

"S-s-sh!" desperately cautioned the trembling Wishful. "Ma'am, kin—kin I be Sambo?"

In abject stupefaction the grotesque female stared.

"Please, ma'am, kin I be Sambo, fer—fer the pink kewpie?"

Something in his supplicating attitude or piteous entreaty must have moved her.

"All right," she agreed, though with no alacrity. "Stick yuhr head through thet hole, an' when yuh see a ball comin'—duck! Be nimble now. If I had Sambo here, I'd wring his infernal neck!"

As Wishful timorously thrust his head through the opening, madame commenced.

"Three fer a quar-tah! We never ask more! Throw them at Sam——"

Roars of laughter drowned her spiel. Sight of a cowboy's face in that particular place—one so tragic, so woebegone—convulsed the rabble. There ensued a record-breaking scramble for balls. Rat-tat, rat-tat, they pelted against the canvas, with a constancy that kept Wishful eternally on the duck. As one player's money or arm gave out, another joyously took his place. The Grande Ronde seemed possessed of an irresistible, insatiable desire for kewpies.

Wishful's head throbbed in its dizzying career, his spinal column was one vast ache, his neck was breaking, and his knees getting wobbly. Surely he'd earned one doll! Still he ducked and panted and prayed. Prayed for Sambo's return. Prayed that no familiar face

confront him. If the boys—if Webb—saw him now, he'd never—well, I suppose——

Suddenly rigid, eyes dilated, the horrified youth faced Webb Martin.

"Hey, Wishful!" yelled the Lazy K cowboy, letting a ball fly with terrific force, catching the paralyzed Wishful dead center, and dropping him like an ox.

By slow degrees he came to—into a world gone mad with mirth. All around him folks were doubled up with laughter—even Sambo. What was funny? He had a horrible suspicion that they thought he was. Bending his aching head to ascertain whether it was his anatomy or attire that attracted such boisterous notice, he beheld himself propped up before the booth, clasping to his bosom a bright, pink kewpie! Wishful was suddenly and acutely conscious.

Seeking only to escape the crowd, to hide his head, the abased youth rose, just as Dad McKeen pushed through the press to investigate, officially, this near riot. Perceiving Wishful as its cause, he opened his mouth to make interrogation, but his eyes lit on Sambo, grinning from ear to ear, and he stiffened in his tracks, mouth still agape. Not recognition, but nameless horror, was expressed in the gaze turned on Sambo.

Dumfounded, Wishful saw that the negro was no less affected by sight of the old deputy. In fact, he seemed literally to wilt beneath Dad's stare, for he suddenly turned tail and slunk around the stand to his accustomed place.

"Dad!" cried Wishful, roughly shaking him by the shoulder. "What's wrong? You act like you see a spook!"

Dad wiped drops of perspiration from his forehead with the back of a shaking hand.

"I—I see wuss!" he croaked, still staring.

"Great horn toad!" gasped Wishful. "Whadda yuh see?"

Dad swallowed convulsively.

"I see a—*a blue-gummed colored gent!*"

"A—what?"

"A blue-gummed colored gent."

"Waal, s'posin' you do," asked the bewildered youth, "what difference does it make if his gums is black or blue?"

"A difference thet's dummed-nigh allus fatal," explained Dad gravely. "Of course you ain't wise. But me—I'm Texan born. Us Texans know the bite of a blue-gummed colored gent is shore death—wusser even'n mad dogs or diamondbacks."

With frank curiosity Wishful glanced at Sambo, but Sambo's gums were no longer on display. Even as he ducked, the negro was nervously keeping one eye on the balls coming his way, and the other on Dad.

"An' it's my bounden duty, as deputy sheriff of Pima County," said Dad conscientiously, "to keep an eye on thet colored gent an' arrest him the fust time he shows any inclination to bite. I ain't one fer lockin' the stable atter the hoss is stoled."

"But Rouse?" protested Wishful. "How yuh goin' to catch Red, if you put in yuhr time on Sambo? I can't help yuh none—tied down like what I be. All-in's gotta stay at the stables, an' Cahlina's got Julia, an' Dimples has gotta perform. Ol' Triangle Z's jist natcherally dependent on you, Dad, to nab Red an' save her face!"

"Savin' lives," Dad declared firmly, "is a derned sight nobler duty'n savin' faces!"

Sick at heart over Dad's desertion, occasioned, he was sure, by a touch of heat, Wishful took himself back to Kitty. Piqued by his long absence, the girl was resolved upon punishing him, but seeing the adored kewpie, she stretched out her arms for it instead.

"Now," asked that indefatigable

miss, "what will we do till the airplane ride?"

The ride! But Wishful was too fagged to face this next horror now.

"Rest!" he feelingly suggested. "Le's set down an' rest!"

"Who's tired?" was the gay rejoinder. "Let's just stroll."

As they strolled, Wishful became aware of a new and horrible torture, in the form of severe, internal pangs. He was hungry! The appetite he'd worked up was aggravated by tantalizing odors of cooking food. It was an hour until the barbecue, and barbecues were notoriously late.

Evidently Kitty's mind flowed in the same channel. "Ain't it funny," she remarked, "how just smelling hamburg makes you hungry?"

"It's shore true," agreed Wishful heartily, "but it ain't funny!"

For a moment they walked in silence.

"Do you know, Wishful," and Kitty's tone would have melted a slab of granite, "I didn't mean that, really—about rather airplaning than eat."

Her escort was neither as obtuse nor unsympathetic as she thought. With all his heart Wishful pitied her. But since he couldn't supply the nourishment for which she delicately hinted, he —with the wisdom of bitter experience—kept his pity to himself.

"There's Webb," Kitty said wistfully, "having lunch in that dear, little open-air restaurant."

"Aw, Webb don't know no better'n to eat rodeo grub," disparaged Wishful, hastily qualifying, "except, of course, the barbecue. I know *thet* meat's fresh, fer Carlsen's had them steers up fer a month fattenin' 'em on corn."

Kitty, a fastidious little prig, shuddered. But by the time the barbecue was announced, she took her place in line with the best of them, doing ample justice to the corn-fed steer. It agreed with her, too, for the meal over, she was content for a time just to mill through the throng, hear the latest rumors concerning Red Rouse, and Sheriff Paxton's chances for apprehending him. It would have been a comparatively restful time for Wishful, but for the ax hanging over his head—a pair of airplane rides at two o'clock, at five per. The continual whir-whir in the sky, kept him reminded of what was becoming a mounting agony.

Another bar to his peace of mind was worry for Dad, still watching Sambo like a hawk. In one of his frequent trips past Madame Estelle's, Wishful left Kitty long enough to dash to where Dad leaned against a pole and protest against this inhuman persecution of a harmless negro.

"Dad," he pleaded, "hev a heart! Duckin's mighty hard work. Yuh're on his nerves sumpthin' fierce!"

"D'ja think so?" asked the old man eagerly. "I'm aimin' to git on 'em so bad he'll try to bite! Then I kin arrest him, see? I've dogged his heels all day, an' I got him squirmin'. In fact," he added hopefully, "in fact, 'twouldn't s'prise me none if he bit most any time now!"

Batty! Batty as a loon, reflected Wishful sadly, turning away. Well, Dad had nothing on him. And, if he were loco now, what would he be at two, when he had to tell the airplane man that he couldn't pay for the rides already arranged. Kitty would know how he'd bluffed all day. A crowd would be there to see him go up. Oh, Lordy!

So morbid was the boy that not even the stirring events being enacted on the track could hold his mind. With the subject of money obsessing him, the taming of murderous outlaws, the roping of wild steers, were less than the dust they kicked up.

He could understand now, why folks robbed safes. He bet there was a girl like Kitty at the bottom of every

crook's career. He *knew* there was one responsible for Red Rouse's. A little señorita started Red riding wild—robbing safes to buy her gewgaws and frills—till he was the worst renegade in Pima County. And only two months out of jail and at it again! Well, *he* wouldn't rob a safe! He'd go loco like a gent——

"Whoopee-e-e! Ride 'im, cowboy!" shrieked the maniacal mob.

Wishful would have to be dead, not to thrill, if ever so faintly, to that cry. He belonged out there—screeching and howling with the boys, instead of sitting here in the grand stand like a danged dude with a girl.

"Ain't it most two?" Kitty made a hundredth repetition.

Mechanically Wishful pulled out his watch and his heart took a flip-flop. It *was* most two!

"Nex' event," boomed a megaphoned voice, "is the bulldoggin' contest!"

Wishful started violently. Dimples' stunt! Until that instant he'd forgotten that Dimples was to make one last attempt to retrieve the honor of Triangle Z. Why, if Dimples won, he'd be jake!

"Wishful," shrilled Kitty, "the plane's coming back! We'd better——"

But a wild hope of deliverance had sent Wishful leaping down the steps and over the high fence to get Dimples' promise to collect his prize money the instant he won it, and loan him ten. A perfectly possible procedure, even in the light of the returning plane, since few human feats are accomplished more quickly than bulldogging a wild steer.

Kitty was at the fence when he recrossed it. Considerably easier in mind, the boy, deaf to her promptings, tensely watched cowboys shunting a steer into the chute. The gate opened and the maddened animal started on its flight down the track, with Webb Martin, the first contestant, right at its side. Leaping in a perfect arc from saddle to steer, Webb flung all his crashing weight on the animal's neck, grasped the horns, and with a dexterous twist, brought it somersaulting to earth.

"Ten seconds!" roared the announcer, as Webb, prostrate, still pinned beneath the horns, held up a hand.

"Good medicine!" was Wishful's honest contribution to the storm of cheers. Dimples would have to go some to beat that. But he was faster than Webb.

"The plane's landing!" urged Kitty frantically. "Come on!"

But Wishful was past all hearing. Almost before the crowd ceased applauding the Lazy K puncher, the chute opened again and a second steer raced down the track, with Dimples McFee, of Triangle Z, alongside.

On the fence a demented cowboy waved his sombrero in time to shrill, sharp yelps. "Yee-e-up! Atta boy! Jump 'im, Dimples! Yah-h-h! Throw 'im—*throw* 'im! Oh, *Lordy!*"

For Triangle Z's jinx had been on the job. Dimples' horse, stumbling at the very instant of his leap, caused him to land a fraction short of his calculations, and so miss his grip on one horn, though he clung desperately to the other till a terrific buck flung him to one side, where, for one soul-shaking moment, he dragged, till his own weight broke his hold, flinging him in the dust. The terrified animal thundered on.

Even as the defeated Dimples, shamefaced, but gamely grinning, limped off the track, Wishful was being hurried to the scene of his supreme humiliation. Putty of face, was he, and putty in the hands of Kitty O'Neil. The only glimmer of light in the ebony gloom was the thought that he'd soon be rid of Kitty. She'd drop him like a hot potato, when she knew he was broke. If he had a million dollars, he'd give it all to that flying hombre to carry her up, up, up—so high she'd never come down!

In his forced flight past the kewpie

booth he had a distinct impression of old Dad emerging therefrom, holding at arm's length a palpably frightened negro, with Madame Estelle viewing the proceedings with positive horror. Had Sambo bit some one, Wishful wondered dully? Had he bit Madame Estelle?

"Quick!" screamed Kitty. "He's ready to go up—the engine's running!"

The motor was running, in fact, when Kitty had pushed him through the spectators. The plane was ready for instant take-off.

Without a single by-your-leave, the girl clambered into the cockpit.

The mercifully benumbed Wishful stepped up to blurt out his poverty, but was sent sprawling by an unexpected and back-hand blow on the chest by an unseen and weighty alligator bag. Recovering equilibrium, he saw that his assailant was none other than Madame Estelle, now disputing with Kitty her right to place, while a white-faced aviator worked feverishly with the mechanism.

Evidently madame was as set on getting that particular ride as Wishful's partner, for she seized the girl around the waist with every intention of lifting her bodily out of the throbbing plane. But she had reckoned without Kitty O'Neil.

This day had seen poor Kitty thwarted in every desire. Now she didn't propose being cheated out of this ride. She struggled against the powerful arms that were lifting her from the cockpit. And during that brief, hectic struggle, something amazing happened. Madame's wig slipped, exposing to the astonished crowd a fiery red thatch of distinct masculine art.

Red Rouse!

Wishful, snapping back to normal, instantly flung both arms around the renegade, holding on like grim death, till Sheriff Paxton—tearing madly across the field—could clap the irons on his wrists. This was accomplished after a brief, but terrific battle, during which Dad McKeen marshaled up the poison-fanged Sambo.

"Thar's two of 'em!" yelled Jerry, turning the captive over to bystanders, and leaping for the plane. "One more an' we'll——"

A deafening roar! A rush. And the airplane was racing down the field. As they helplessly watched, it took the air, bearing away into the heavens a scared little girl in scarlet and a bright, pink kewpie doll.

"Waal, she's gittin' her ride." In his unutterable relief, Wishful spoke his thoughts aloud. "An' he won't find me here none, when he comes back to collect!"

"He won't come back!" said Sheriff Paxton grimly, assuring himself that the rodeo money in the alligator bag was all intact. "Wishful, it's my sad duty—an' I shrink from it—to tell you thet your gal has bin flewed off with by a bandit."

"Bandit—him?" Wishful paled.

"He shore is! Thet coon's nerve broke, an' he blabbed it all to Dad. Seems them three planned fer months to rob the rodeo. Thet flyin' hombre is a pal of Red's—runs a booze plane across the Mexican border. They wrote in months back, gittin' the concession. They aimed to steal the money an' make their git-away by air, leavin' no trace—the slickest plot you ever heered. Sambo thought the game was up when Dad nabbed him. So did Red. He'd have made his git-away, but fer your gal bein' in the plane. Pore leetle kid! She shore showed him up. Thanks to Dad fer arrestin' Sambo fer a dangerous charac——"

"Fer tryin' to bite me!" corrected Dad proudly. "An' fust an' foremost, fer seein' he was a blue-gummed——"

"I didn't an' I ain't!" hysterically cried the ball dodger. "I wuzn't a-bitin', but jist resistin' arres——"

"Hyar!" warned Jerry authoritatively. "Whatever you say'll be used agin' you."

"I don't give a whoop!" declared the manacled Sambo wildly, rubbing one cheek against his right shoulder. "Fer the last time thet ol' wampus has called me a negro—which I ain't an' kin prove! If my gums is blue, it's the dentist's an' not natur's fault. But he told me the dark plates wuz best!"

It was true! The rubbed cheek was several shades lighter. Sambo was not a blue-gummed, but a burnt-cork, negro!

"Waal, thet's thet!" beamed Dad, in an effort to cheer up Wishful, who looked unusually forlorn. "Ol' Triangle Z shore come in strong at the finish. Jerry says I'll git the reward, but I ain't stingy. Derned if I don't stake you-all, an' send a nice little present to Kitty!"

"To Kitty?" Wishful said huskily. "How'll you send anything to Kitty? You know, Dad, she wasn't such a bad ol' gal. I hate like blazes thet——"

"Don't you worry, Wishful," grinned Dad, pointing. "See? He's leavin' her off at Lee's!"

Far away a tiny speck swooped out of the blue, poised a moment on the prairie, and, free of its passenger, soared again, cleaving a bee line south. Wishful's spirits soared with it. He had money, the day was young, and his troubles had flown away. *Oh, Lordy!*

PASSING OF RICHEST WOMAN RANCHER

THE recent death of Mrs. Henrietta M. King, at the age of ninety-three, at her home in Kingsville, Texas, still further diminishes the ranks of the surviving pioneer women of the West. Although almost unknown to the outside world, Mrs. King was one of the wealthiest women in America, and the owner of what is said to be the largest ranch in the world. She inherited this property from her late husband, Captain Richard King, a noted cattleman and soldier of the early days of Texas. As a bride, Mrs. King went to live in a blockhouse, as the ranch at that time was in constant danger from Indians and bandits.

Following the death of her husband many years ago, Mrs. King undertook the management of the ranch, which borders the gulf of Mexico for nearly a hundred miles and comprises about 1,280,000 acres. Under her supervision, the herds increased until of late years the average number of calves branded each season is put at more than one hundred thousand. Advance in land values from a few cents to many dollars an acre brought her an enormous fortune.

In due time, the immense property was fenced, a portion of it was placed under cultivation, and the breeds of cattle were improved. Between six hundred and one thousand Mexican workmen were employed regularly throughout all seasons and lived with their families on the ranch in houses provided by the owner.

In 1911, the residence that had replaced the ancient blockhouse was destroyed by fire, and Mrs. King then built what has been pronounced the finest farm home in America, a concrete and marble mansion. The rugs and tapestries provided for this handsome residence were woven from designs furnished by Mrs. King and they recount allegorically the romantic history of Texas and the cattle ranges.

Except for occasional visits to the large cities, Mrs. King spent her time on her ranch and was active in ministering to the welfare of her employees.

Pioneer Towns of the West

El Paso

By Erle Wilson

Author of "Minneapolis," etc.

EL PASO, the largest city on the Mexican border, is the gateway to the Southwest and Old Mexico. It stands on historic ground, having been visited by the earliest explorers from Spain. The first settlement was made at El Paso del Norte about 1659. The town was won by conquest from Mexico in 1836, when Texas was a nation, and the first United States settlement followed the Mexican War. Prior to this time the site had been known as Ponce de Leon Ranch, after the Spanish family who owned it.

This pioneer town of the Southwest was the first trading post and the first settlement in the territory which is now Texas. For a time it was called Franklin, but when the new town was plotted in 1858 the name was changed to El Paso, which is Spanish for "the pass." As it lies at the lowest snow-free pass in the Rocky Mountains, this appellation is quite a fitting one. The town was incorporated as a city in May, 1873.

El Paso is located at the western extreme of Texas, and nestles on the mesas at the foot of lordly Mount Franklin, surrounded by mountain peaks. On the one hand rise the colorful Organ ranges, Hueco Mountains, and the rugged Sacramentos; on the other the majestic Guadalupes and the Sierra Madres. At the city's feet meanders the Rio Grande River. A few miles above El Paso one may stand with a foot in Texas, a foot in New Mexico, and a head or hand in Old Mexico. It has an altitude of three thousand seven hundred and ten feet, and a mild, dry, warm climate, with a yearly record of three hundred and thirty-one sunshiny days.

Although it possesses much historic and romantic interest, the El Paso of to-day is a thriving American city, rich in natural resources, with more than two hundred manufacturing institutions, and a population of one hundred thousand six hundred and twenty-four. It is the market place for the Rio Grande Valley, which has been transformed from an arid waste to a fertile agricultural section by the Elaphant Butte dam. This reservoir, the largest man-made lake in the world, was erected by the United States government to store the flood waters of the Rio Grande for irrigation purposes.

This Texas city is the important railway center of the Southwest. Eight railroads, connecting with every part of the United States and most sections of Mexico, enter it. One of the largest

customs smelters in the world, where ores from New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico are reduced to metals, is located here. It also possesses the largest wooden-box factory in the world, which fact is accounted for by its proximity to vast virgin forests. Stock raising, which was El Paso's first important industry, is still one of the chief sources of its prosperity.

Fort Bliss, the largest United States cavalry-post reservation in the Southwest, is only a few minutes' ride by auto or street car from El Paso. Here the government also maintains the largest base hospital on the Mexican border. Opposite the city, on the east bank of the Rio Grande, is the Mexican town of Cuidad Juarez, which is connected with El Paso by bridges and an electric railway.

Not only is El Paso a thriving business city, but it is also a city of comfortable and attractive homes showing the influence of early Spanish architecture, set in midst of beautiful trees, green lawns, and flowers. It possesses first-class schools, paved and graded roads, steam and electric railroads, and a city-owned water plant, supplied from deep wells high on the slopes of Mount Franklin. Its citizens are the hearty kind of Western folks one likes to meet and know.

El Paso has the commission form of city government, its present mayor being Mr. Richard M. Dudley.

Among the city's representative citizens are: Mr. Charles N. Bassett, Mr. H. B. Stevens, Zach White, Mr. Charles Davis, Mr. F. M. Murchison, Mr. J. J. Ormsbee, Doctor J. W. Laws, Doctor John C. Schuster, Bishop A. J. Schuler, Mr. R. E. Thomason, Mr. Adolph Schwartz, Mr. Volney M. Brown, Mr. Tom Lea, and Judge J. M. Goggin.

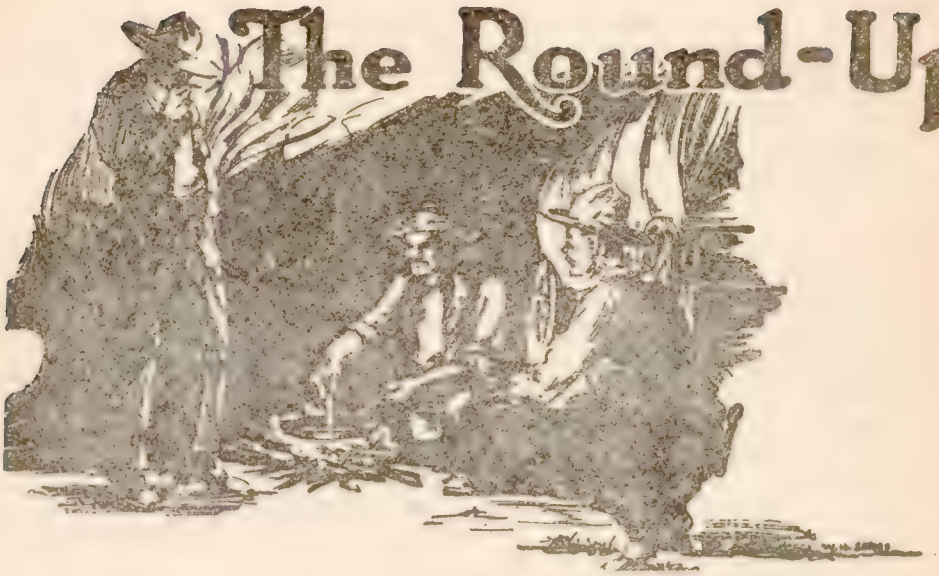
OUTLAWS TERRORIZE WEALTHY OSAGES

FOR months past, agents of the United States department of justice have been stationed in the Osage Indian country with a view to investigating the mysterious deaths of twenty or more prominent and wealthy members of the Osage tribe. These agents have posed as rum runners, or cattle buyers, or outlaws of the Osage hills. The evidence they are gathering is expected to do much to clear up the murders that have puzzled the authorities and terrorized the members of the Osage tribe during the past three years. It is believed that the clews will lead to a ruthless band of outlaws, under a crafty leader, who has been systematically killing and plundering these Indians of their newly acquired wealth.

Anna Brown, a wealthy Osage girl, was one of the first victims. Her body was found in a cañon six miles north of Fairfax, a bullet through the brain. After this, Henry Roan, a rich Osage boy and a relative of Anna Brown, disappeared, and later his body was found on a deserted road, with an assassin's bullet in it. A few days afterward, the lawyer who had been investigating these two murders was himself found dead, near the Katy railway in the vicinity of Pershing, in Osage County. Other murders and depredations followed.

A few weeks ago, a court of inquiry began to hold sessions behind closed doors in Pawhuska. This court was conducted by both Federal and State authorities. Indians and white men from the range country flocked into Pawhuska, eager to follow the progress of the proceedings.

The Round-Up



IT is with deep and very sincere regret that we have to begin this evenin's proceedin's by announcin' the passin' of Peter J. Walters, better known to all of us as "Wild Horse Pete," who has been a most welcome and honored pal among us at these here meetin's for many years.

Wild Horse Pete did not die, as we are sure he would have liked to, with his boots on, but in a hospital at Forsyth, Montana, death following a two weeks' illness from spotted fever.

Born at Brownsville, Minnesota, Wild Horse Pete came to Montana in 1890, and for several years rode the range in the Havre, Landusky and Fort Benton country. He came to Rosebud County fifteen years ago and homesteaded in the Porcupine district. He owned a six hundred and forty-acre horse ranch at the time of his death. He was one of the best known handlers of wild horses Montana has ever produced. He was an expert rider and bulldogger, and for years was a prominent contestant at many of the big Western rodeos. In 1907 he outrode all contestants at the Frontier Celebration at Cheyenne.

The Garfield County *Journal*, Edwards, Montana, closes its long account of Wild Horse Pete's life and death with: "In his death Montana and Rosebud County loses one of her best-known real characters. They don't make men like Wild Horse Pete every day in the year." We sure echo those sentiments.

"Piute," who hails from Los Angeles, California, will talk about cowboy life as he has lived it and is now on his way to live it again. Piute, make your little bow and tell 'em.

"BOSS OF THE ROUND-UP AND FOLKS: I'll admit that I'm a very poor hand at speaking, but I'd sure like to cast a vote for C. B. Whitney in the difference of opinion between him and Jack McCauley as to a cowboy's life. I have punched cows from Montana to the Rio Grande, and as far East and West from the Rockies as cattle run on the open range, and never have I had the good fortune to get on a pay roll where the hours were short and I didn't often have to sleep in a wet bed if it happened to rain. I have slept with my boots on many a time.

"I remember very well one spring round-up in a northwestern State about

six years ago. There were eighteen men on the job and over seventy saddle horses. It was the general rule to change horses three times a day, sometimes oftener. That is outside of horses for night herd. On that round-up we worked from ten hours to fourteen hours every day, including Sundays. I worked for one outfit on the west slope that used to send a crew into the bad lands with a pack outfit, no cook, no tent, and no wagon. We did our own cooking when we had the chance, slept in blankets for ten days straight, and rode from daylight till dark most of the time. Later on, I sold my saddle and moved into town. But I know a place where the ranches still consist of round-pole corrals, a log cabin, and a water hole. The cattle run out the year round, and I'm on my way there, right now, never again to roam where the lights are bright and the hours are short, and a man's bed roll stays dry all the time.

"I have been a steady reader of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE for several years, and can't say too much for it. I like the stories best by Baxter, Buckley, Manning, and Harry Golden, but they are all good. 'Iron Dust,' 'Unseen Acres,' and 'Jerry Peyton's Notched Inheritance,' couldn't be beat.

"Now, as I said to start with, making speeches is out of my line, but I wanted to help Brother Whitney in correcting some of Jack McCauley's statements. I'll admit that 'there be outfits and outfits,' but at that I'm for Brother Whitney. His description fits all the real cow outfits I ever worked for in eleven different States.

"Don't let any one feed the bunch around the campfire that stuff about the West being dead. It is tamed down a little from what it was thirty years ago, but you can still find thousands of cattle that never saw a feed rack, hard-riding, forty-dollar cow-punchers, and once in a while an old time two-gun man. Most cow-punchers still pack guns on the range, but they are not considered a necessity. I am no contest bronc buster, but I have pulled down some money with a hard twist, and I've played at every phase of the cow game.

"Well, adios, all; see you later."

"Just a girl," Blackie Bollinger, Merkel, Texas, will now come out of the shadow of the chuck wagon and into the fire light. But before you start to talk, Blackie, my child, let me tell you and the others about this "just a girl" business. We have a sixteen-year-old daughter, who has ridden since before she could walk or talk. Honest, she has. We used to put a blanket on a quiet horse, set the tot up in front of us, between our arms, and off we'd go for miles and miles. Well, for the past five or six years that "just a girl" has been a better all-around rider than her old man ever was, is, or ever will be.

Sorry to have kept you standin' there Blackie, but you know how us old fellers are, once we get goin' there is no stoppin' us, but you jest go right ahead and tell 'em all you've got to say, and don't be a bit nervous about it.

"BOSS AND FRIENDS: Speaking of horses, I have worked on quite a few ranches, if I am just a girl, and have handled about as many broncs as the next fellow. I rode a horse the other day that had the cold jaw, and boy, Howdy, but he is a spoiled horse. All he knows is to run away. When he gets to running I have to reach over and get him by the cheek of the bridle and pull his head around to his side before he will stop. You can't break a runaway horse that has the cold jaw by main strength. I believe in using kindness on a horse. I don't care what type he is. There is a way of breaking a horse besides with spade bits, Mexican spurs, squirt and—brutality. I believe there are quite a few who will agree with me there on that subject.

"Please give us some of those interesting stories like the 'Spectacular Kid' and 'The Girl of Glory Gulch.'"

Next to draw, Milton Higgins, Chicago, Illinois:

"Boss and Folks: As I am a reader of this magazine, and also a member of the N. R. A., I always look for gun dope by F. R. Buckley, as I always find it good reading. I read Mr. H. H. Laut's letter on six-shooters, and will say that if he is the same caliber of a peace officer as the six gun he carries, it's no wonder the Yakima Valley and also the city are such bum places to live. He says a .32-20 is the best six gun going. I will say I have not found it so. I may not be as old or had the experience that he has, but I have owned both the .32-20 and the .38 special. As for shooting straight, I think he will find that all Colts will do it if the man behind it holds true. For one thing the .32-20 has very little recoil, but neither has the .38 special. As for the .45 I guess it does somewhat, but I never think of that. The main thing is to kill what you shoot at. I have a .45 Colt now and will say it is the best gun I ever pulled a trigger on. But if you want a long-range pistol, get a Luger. They will shoot three times as far as a .32-20. I'll tell you what I think of a man who is afraid of the recoil of a six gun and will run one down on that account. Nine out of ten of them you will find do their shooting at targets and also look at a shell and tell you the bullet is too big for the shell. They don't know what is in the shell. But on the other hand if any of them had to stand up and look over a six gun at a man or an animal that would put up a fight, they would shake in their boots and would do well to hit a four-year-old bull at ten yards. In my opinion, a .32-20 is a good gun to kill rabbits and birds and that's about all. My pal and I killed five mountain lions or 'cougars' as we call them in the West, in Idaho above Lewiston on the North Fork of the Clear Water River, and I'll say that a cougar falls from a .45 or a .38 special about the same as from a .32 special Winchester rifle. The only difference is they don't bounce quite as far away from the tree when the bullet hits them. But we had a fellow with us who had a .32-20. He is from Couer d'Alene. He shot one with his gun, and we ran it for three days before we got it up another tree again, and I'll tell the world we didn't use the .32-20 on it that time, and in all my experience the .32-20 always proved to be the least valuable gun.

Give me my old .45 Colt. It may not shoot a mile, but it will shoot true as far as I can trust myself to hold true, and when it gets there, it still has kick enough to push a .32-20 bullet back down its own barrel. As for the 250-3000 Savage, I also had one, paid sixty dollars for it, and traded for a Winchester worth ten. The 250 is a fine gun if you live where you don't have to hunt in the brush. I can almost say it is impossible to kill game with one if you even hit a small twig first, and also that your game even if hit hard will go a long ways. I much prefer the .30-40 Krag, and have one. It may not hold up at targets, but I have killed lots of game with it and sure like it."

Guess, after all that shootin', it will take a week for the smoke to blow off this here range meetin' ground. 'Night, till next week.

Miss Helen Rivers, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Rivers will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Letters will be forwarded direct when correspondents so wish; otherwise they will be answered here. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Hollow Tree.

IN a letter to the Gang a while back Mrs. C. C. Anno, of Clarinda, Iowa, told of an old covered bridge in her neighborhood called the La Port Bridge, which she believed might be the only one in existence. Well, from the letters which follow, it appears that there are quite a few of such old bridges in various parts of the country.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: Saw that a lady from Iowa thinks her covered bridge is the only one in the country. I know of at least six right here in our beautiful New Hampshire and Vermont. One of them in days gone by has had stage-coach holdups. There is one about three and a half miles from where I live that has been there a great many years. It is about one half mile long. It is so old that there has been talk of tearing it down, but it is a landmark and the old people hate to see it go. These bridges are all wood and look so narrow that it doesn't seem as if teams could pass each other on them; most of them are from seventy-five to one hundred years old. If the lady would like the history of them and will write me I will try to obtain a full and correct one for her.

You may not remember me, but I am one of your Gangsters and have many friends in the gang whom I have neglected lately on account of the serious illness of my little daughter. She is better now, and I will try to make up for lost time. May The Tree live forever!

MRS. E. DAVIS.
R. 3, Winchester, N. H.

DEAR GANG: A few words in regard to the old-style bridges, now very rare. I read in The Tree that there is one such in Iowa, also the author of the article left one under the impression that it was the only one in existence. I wish to inform you that there are four in my own county, Clarke County, Ohio. One of these bridges is located seven miles east of the city of Springfield, on the National Pike. The others are west of the city. Two of them are also on the National Pike, while the third is on a side road leading off the Pike. This one is known as the old Snyder Road Bridge and was built some seventy-five or eighty years ago.

I also know of another of these bridges in the southern part of my State. It is a suspension bridge. The lumber is all poplar. The arch pieces that are at each end of the bridge were all hand sawed. In fact, all the lumber was sawed by hand and hewn with an ax. This bridge was built by a young man at the age of twenty. He attained the ripe old age of seventy-five and died in the year 1880.

WILLIAM F. JOHNSTON.
R. F. D. 1, Springfield, Ohio.

DEAR TREE: In reply to Mrs. C. C. Anno through The Tree, there are four covered bridges in this State. The two in the towns of Andover and Turner have pretty settings.

I am a great lover of outdoors, and of hunting and fishing in particular. I'll be more than glad to send any one information about hunting in this State or anything else they would like to know about Maine. C. L. BAILEY.

Turner, Maine.

DEAR HOLLOW TREE: Mrs. C. C. Anno, of Iowa, asked for information regarding covered bridges, and as I know of the location of several—have passed over dozens that I have forgotten the location of—I will tell her through your columns where to find them.

There is one at Taylorsville, Spencer County, Kentucky, unless it has been removed in the last few years. There is one over the Tallapoosa River, near Horseshoe Bend; this is in Tallapoosa County, Alabama, on the State highway between Alexander City and Dadeville. There is also one over Hillabee Creek, about six miles from Alexander City, one over Little Hillabee, near the same place, and others in almost any direction that you may wish to go from that place. Covered bridges are more common in that part of the country than any other kind.

On a recent motor trip from Alexander City to Louisville, Kentucky, I passed over so many that I did not try to keep count of them after the first morning. Some of them were so old that they sagged in the middle and looked as if they were about to fall in, but they bore up under our weight without a tremor, and we were heavily loaded, seven of us in a large touring car with camping equipment. I know nothing of the history of these bridges; that information could be obtained at the courthouse at Dadeville, Alabama.

Speaking of the bridge near Horseshoe Bend, reminds me that "the Bend," as it is called by the natives, is probably one of the least known historical spots in the United States. It was here that the last battle of the Seminole Indians, so they say, was fought. General Jackson was in charge of the white forces. According to the legends of the residents, the battle raged for several days up and down the river at this point. The cavalry is supposed to have forded the Tallapoosa River about three miles upstream at what is called the New York Shoals—why they're called this, I don't know. Almost any man in the neighborhood can talk for hours about the battle and events before and after it. There is a monument placed there by the government, also one donated by a former owner of the Horseshoe Farm, as the plantation embracing this territory is called. Although this spot is, or was, on the Florida Short Route, practically none of the tourists stopped there, doubtless not knowing that such a place existed. There are no signs or markers visible from the road, and all the visitors who have heard of it have trouble finding it. Part of this battleground is in cultivation now. It was quite common during the first years of its cultivation for the plowmen to unearth bones, arrowheads, and many other remains of the battle.

If I have the opportunity I will obtain some pictures and information about these bridges for Mrs. Anno. ALABAMA.

Care of The Tree..

Order a badge and join our happy circle.

Send twenty-five cents in stamps or coin to The Hollow Tree, Western Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, and state whether you wish the button style for your coat lapel, or a pin.

DEAR MISS RIVERS: I noticed a letter in The Tree from Iowa, telling of a covered bridge there; maybe this will be of interest to the writer of that letter and others in The Gang.

Ashtabula, where I live, is one of the leading iron-ore ports of the world. It also claims to have more ground under glass than any other city of the country.

In this section I know of at least nine covered bridges. The oldest and the one in best condition is situated at Rock Creek, Ohio, about twenty-two miles from here. This bridge, which I have just returned from visiting especially for this letter, was built in 1832. It is on one of the main highways and many trucks and autos use it every day. It is a double-barreled bridge, and, outside of a new roof and flooring and a few side boards, it is just as it was built ninety-three years ago.

I surely would like to hear from some of the Gang; I am twenty-four years old.

H. R. JOHNSON.

28 Maple Street, Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio.

Will brothers in their late teens or early twenties who're interested in music write to Doc, in care of The Tree? Anton J. Soares, P. O. Box 276,

Hayward, California, is a lover of nature, especially wild flowers and birds. He says: "I am alone and lonely and will be glad to hear from any who care to write. Possibly among those with the same interests there may be one who would like to come West and make his home with me. I am sure he will enjoy it."

"I am starting a Hollow Tree scrapbook; it will contain poems, cards, letters and snaps from Gangsters. Anything will be welcomed, even if it is only your address written on a card," writes Dominick Kuczwalstà, 109 Howard Street, Schenectady, New York.

W. P. Hofstetter, R. A., Box 214, Los Gatos, California, will answer questions about the West and Northwest; hunting, trapping, prospecting, birds, animals, flowers, trees and fish have been his life work. Can any one supply this brother with the "Cowboy Dance?"

Mr. and Mrs. T. L. Sexton, 2206 E. 22nd Street, Kansas City, Missouri, would like to hear from other young married couples in the Gang. He is a baker and will be glad of letters from Eastern brothers who follow that trade.

Any show card-writers in our circle? The Badger asks that you write him in care of The Tree.

Who'd like a pen pal from Ireland? Edward O'Sullivan, 31 McSweeney, Villis, Cork City, Ireland, has his pen all ready.

If you're a brother seventeen years old who likes camping, C. Sanders, En Route Camping Club, 10, Wickersley Road, Battersea, London S. W. 11, England, wants to hear from you.

Edward E. Spinks, Ignacio, Marin County, California, wants correspondence on any subject. "It doesn't matter if you are twelve or seventy years of age, a millionaire or a hobo, I shall be glad to hear from you," he says.

"I'm a fiddle fan. Will those who have fiddles on the heart or head write me?" asks L. K. Smith, 233 14th Street, Denver, Colorado.

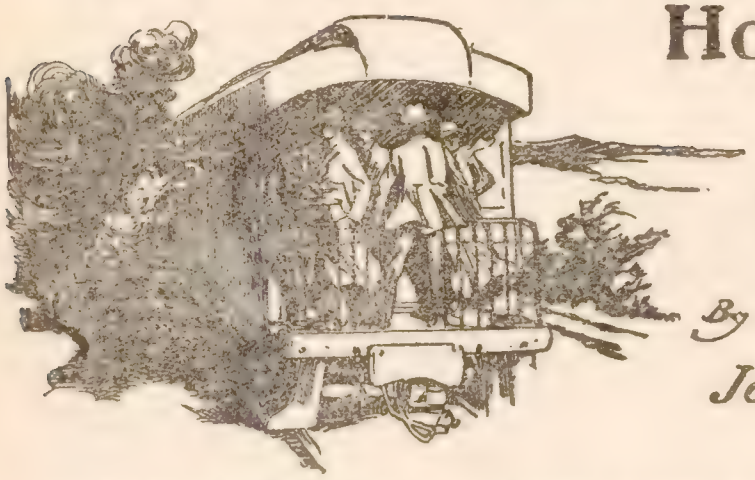
"Anybody coming this way to visit, or to seek work or just as a tourist, I will be glad to correspond with, especially brothers from twenty to thirty," writes William V. Hale, Box 678, Hastings, Minnesota.

ANOTHER ALASKAN DOG HERO

THE latest addition to the ranks of dog heroes of the Northland is Leuty, a collie. Leuty wandered with his lost master, Hugh Dennessey, for nine days across the wastes of the Aleutian Islands in blizzard weather, according to reports from Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and eventually led a rescue party to the frozen body.

Dennessey met his death in a terrific wind storm days after he had been separated, early in March, from an Eskimo with whom he was hunting sheep. The storm paralyzed travel in the Aleutian Islands for six days. Shorty after dawn on March 9th, Leuty, emaciated and dull-eyed, scratched feebly at the door of his master's home. The collie was rested and given food. He then led the rescue party to Dennessey's body. Hair which clung to the dead man's clothing showed how the dog tried to save the vital spark in his master with the heat from his own weakened body.

Where To Go and How To Get There



By John North

It is our aim in this department to be of genuine practical help and service to those who wish to make use of it. Don't hesitate to write to us and give us the opportunity of assisting you to the best of our ability.

Address all communications to John North, care of WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

HOMESTEADING IN ALBERTA

THE man who takes up land in Alberta with the idea of raising stock, or of growing wheat, or simply with the view of settling down as an everyday honest-to-goodness farmer, has one advantage in life anyhow, the possibility of experiencing a big surprise, for one never knows what the land in Alberta is going to turn up. If he is digging a well for water a spout of oil may hit him in the face; if he is excavating to build his house he may strike a vein of coal. You never can tell! The land here is so rich in everything that the difficulty is to know what is *not* under the soil, rather than what is. It certainly contains every element of surprise.

A large area, sufficient for hundreds of settlers, is available for homesteads, and those who feel like taking a chance in the homestead lottery have a better outlook here than in many places, for the land is fertile, there is lots of room for newcomers, and settlers are welcome.

The transcontinental lines of the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National Railways have had much to do in bringing the prairies in touch with the outer world and in the development of the province. They have built thousands of miles of tracks, their fleets sail the seven seas, their river and lake craft carry produce to ocean ports, and their telegraph, telephone and radio connections link up the most distant outposts with the cities and keep them informed as to the latest market conditions.

Land may be bought along the railway lines at moderate prices, and as no change of citizenship is required on other than free homestead lands this is worth looking into by Americans who want to branch out. The Canadian Pacific has lately adopted a long-term plan of easy payments extending to thirty-five years. Fertile land, within

easy distance of railroad, stores and towns costs as little as twenty dollars an acre. Seven per cent of the total price is paid at the time of purchase and free use of the land is given for one year, without interest, and the second payment does not fall due for two years; then the farmer has thirty-four years in which to pay off the full amount in equal annual payments. Special inspection trips at reduced fares are arranged for prospective settlers, who are invited to write for full information to M. E. Thornton, Canadian Pacific Railway Depot, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Alberta is a large province, its total area being 255,285 square miles. Its length from north to south is 750 miles, and its width varies from 180 to 400 miles. From this it will be seen that there is no lack of elbow room, nor is there likely to be for a good many years to come, for while the population is increasing it is doing so steadily and not by freak spurts. "Boom" towns are not encouraged here. Where a town grows it stays and is a permanent market or outlet for the surrounding farms.

The vast mineral resources in Alberta attract quite an army of prospectors; its oil fields are being developed by responsible firms, gold and coal mines are opening up, road making is active, and all this brings mouths that the farmer has to feed.

A large area of rich, fertile land, suitable for grain growing, dairying and stock raising, in a district abounding in game, fish and timber, is available for settlement midway between northern and southern Alberta. Over four hundred quarter sections for homesteads are in this area, information of which may be obtained by writing to the Minister of Agriculture, Government Buildings, Edmonton, Alberta.

REAL RANCH LIFE WITH THRILLS

"DEAR MR. NORTH: Of course we read the WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE, and needless to say we like it. We are a bit wild and woolly ourselves, but at that we are all quite safe and sane.

"The range country is sure suffering these days, with the horse market gone and the beef market slipping. All that seems to be left is sheep, and who wants to blacken his soul by running sheep? Being a long way from the beaten paths of travel our country has not been overrun with hunters from the outside, and we have decided to entertain a few guests this summer and guide big-game hunting parties in the fall. I believe that what we have out here would be of interest to folks who want to see the West where it is still young and to enjoy the silences of the everlasting hills for a while.

"The Diamond L is one of the old picturesque ranches of the West with all the thrill and romance of the open spaces, and is beautifully located at the foot of the Continental Divide. In a few hours you can stand on "the top of the world." We have gold mines and prospectors in the gulches, and, of course, horses and cattle and cowboys. We have bronchos that buck and bawl, and we have mustangs that are as gentle as kittens.

"North of the Salmon River, where our ranch is located, we have a solid wilderness to the west of us for two hundred miles. In this territory occurred the old Elk City and Thunder Mountain gold rushes. Here also is the only trail into a large part of this wilderness, over which the Nez Perces left their reservation to fight their way to Canada.

"This is still a truly frontier country, and a large area in the heart of the State scarcely knows the tread of the white man. Out here we have folks who can reach the "outside" only by horseback or pack outfit; children who have never seen a railway, a train, a cemetery, or heard a sermon. Our nearest town is Salmon City, twenty-five

miles away. It has the honor of being served by two "mixed trains" a week. It takes these trains all day to go a hundred miles. Here also is the old-time Concord stagecoach, still in active service in full frontier style. East of Salmon City can be seen the ruins of the farthest-north Mormon fort where a desperate stand was made against the Indians.

"It strikes me that you might want to get where you can fork a horse again and lose yourself in the heart of the big hills and open spaces. If so, we should be very glad to turn you loose on our range this summer. I am sure you would enjoy working with the boys at the corrals. We expect to break out about fifty head of broncs after grass gets good, and some of them will take all summer to break, too, but that merely makes something doing all the time. We have guides, camp cooks, horses, log cabins, and some of the most beautiful trips and trails that ever lay out of doors. We should be very glad to have you come, and can promise a real good Western time at a modest figure to any of your readers who would like to get a whiff of the wild and woolly West.

"R. W. WILSON,
"Diamond L Ranch,
"North Fork, Idaho."

Many thanks for the invitation, brother. I certainly would enjoy being turned loose on that range. Well, next year, perhaps. In the meantime some of our boys who are so anxious to see real ranch life will no doubt write to you and make this their summer outing.

PRAIRIE FIRES RAVAGE SOUTH DAKOTA

WESTERN South Dakota was swept a few weeks ago by prairie fires which left in their wake miles of blackened acres with smoldering ruins of ranch houses and haystacks before they were finally brought under control by the fire fighters. The country through which the flames raced is sparsely settled and while the blazes were spectacular, the total damage is not believed to be large. Ranchers and Indians brought the flames under control along the South Dakota-Nebraska border on the Rosebud Indian reservation. Many of the fire fighters were severely burned and some were taken to hospitals for treatment. The live stock generally was well protected.

GRUESOME FIND IN HOLLOW TREE

WHILE hunting in the mountain regions about eight miles north of Elm Springs, Arkansas, a few weeks ago, a party of sportsmen found that their hounds had pursued a rabbit until it took refuge in a huge oak, in which was a hollow near the ground and just about large enough for the rabbit to enter.

The men proceeded to enlarge the opening and found that the interior of the tree contained the skeleton of a man and an old flintlock rifle. The weapon was loaded and beside it was a buckskin pouch containing more ammunition.

The identity of the skeleton is a mystery. It is supposed that many years ago, probably before the Civil War, the man was wounded either by Indians or by a wild animal, and crawled into the hollow, which then had a much larger aperture. With the growth of the tree, the opening diminished in size, entirely concealing the victim of this tragedy of the wild.

MISSING

This department is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

LANG, WALTER S.—His mother is very anxious to find him, as there is something of importance he should know. He or any one knowing his whereabouts is asked to write to Mrs. T. O. K., R. 3, Box 598, Jacksonville, Fla.

McMAINS, FRANK.—He is thirty-five years of age, five feet eight inches in height, has light-blue eyes, a light complexion, and weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds. His children, Ione Marguerite and Robert Delbert, are most anxious to find him, as it has been eleven years since they have seen him. Any information will be gratefully received by Aner Mays, R. 3, Box 61-F. F., Wetumka, Okla.

ATTENTION.—If the parents or relatives of children, who were kidnaped from seventeen to thirty years ago, will write to the address below, they may learn something which will be helpful to them in their search. Please write to Mrs. A. E. Richardson, Box 248, 1219 Tennessee Ave., Palestine, Texas.

FLUHARTY, HARRY.—He is twenty-three years of age, five feet seven inches in height, has blue eyes, light-brown hair, and weighs one hundred and fifty-five pounds. On December 29, 1924, he was in Lavoye, Wyoming. His mother and brother are very much worried over his absence, and will appreciate any information. Please notify Ernest Fluharty, Box 601, Lavoye, Wyo.

BROWN, SIMON.—Your mother is very much worried over your absence. You are asked to write to your sister Ora, or Mrs. Jordan Brown, Star Route, Sayre, Okla.

REILLY, JOHN.—I was born August 9, 1897, and my mother's name was Mary. When I was five years of age I was put in a home in Staten Island, New York, and when I was twelve years old I was sent to work on a farm. I have heard that some of my relatives live in Brooklyn, New York. I am very anxious to find my relatives, and shall be more than grateful for any information. Please write to John Reilly, 197 Lincoln St., Wilkes Barre, Pa.

JOHNSON, OTHEL GRADY, formerly of Glens, Kan.—He is about twenty-nine years of age, has brown hair, bluish-gray eyes, and fair complexion with freckles. His sister is very anxious to find him, as she hasn't seen him since 1906, at Eureka Springs, Ark. Information will be appreciated by Betty Johnson, whose married name is Mrs. Bessie Louray, 1223 Fletcher St., Chicago, Ill.

RHYON, BLANCHE LORENA.—She is about twenty-three years of age, has deep blue eyes, brown curly hair, and a small pug nose. She lived at the House of The Good Shepherd, in 1917, but later she was at the Pontiac Reformatory in Illinois. Her half sister is trying to get in touch with her, and will be glad for any news of her. Write to Betty Johnson, whose married name is Mrs. Bessie Louray, 1223 Fletcher St., Chicago, Ill.

FITZGERALD, MARTIN PATRICK.—He is thirty years old, and has a fair complexion. Prior to 1915 he was employed on a farm near La Prairie, and Brousseau Junction, Quebec, Canada. In 1915, he enlisted in the 87th Battalion, Canadian Grenadier Guards, and served overseas, until the battalion returned in 1919. In 1920 he left Montreal, Canada, for Valleyfield, Quebec, Canada. Any one knowing his present address please notify J. V. Jolander, Box 195, Granby, Quebec, Canada.

OLDHAM, WILLIAM M.—He lived in Madisonville, Ky., and in 1917 he enlisted in Company B, 167th Infantry, and sailed for France. On September 14, 1918, he was killed in action. His relatives are anxious to find his clothes and valuable papers, which he left in Callaster, Wyo. Please send information to his sister, Mrs. Green Gill, 301 Sebree St., Earlington, Ky.

SHANK, IONA.—She was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Hill some years ago, and her name was changed to Iona Hill Later Mr. and Mrs. Hill separated, and the little girl was taken to live with Mr. Hill's mother, who became ill and could not look after the child. The Ladies' Aid in Ridgway, Pa., then took her in 1922. Any information will be appreciated by Mrs. M. M. Hill, 115 East 5th St., Emporium, Pa.

SMITH, JOSEPH A., formerly of Flora, Ill.—He is about forty years of age, has black hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and thirty-five pounds. He was in the oil business at St. Louis, Mo., but expected to go to Louisiana later to lease oil lands. His friend is worried about him, and will be thankful for any information. Write to Mrs. Leibbie Blair, Flora, Ill.

SEMRAN, EMMA.—She is nineteen years of age, and may be going under the name of Dale Patchull. In March, 1924, she was in La Junta, Colo. Any information of her present whereabouts will be gratefully received by her mother, Mrs. E. Semran, 724 Clybourn St., Milwaukee, Wis.

ABEMATHY, PAUL L.—He was in Akron, Ohio, in 1922. His mother is grieving over his absence, and he is asked to please write to his sister, Mrs. Bebbie E. Grills, 54 South Martha Ave., Apartment 5, Akron, Ohio.

SHACKELFORD, NOELL PRENTICE.—He has been missing from his home for a number of years. His sister and brother will be extremely grateful for any information which will aid them in finding him. Please write to Lena Bryan, Bonsall, Cal., or to E. W. Shackelford, Box 1443, Modesto, Cal.

ROSENBURG, MARY DOROTHY or EVA.—She was last heard from in Columbus, Ohio. Her friend is very anxious to hear from her, and will be thankful for any information. Clementine, care of this magazine.

POTTER, FRANCIS DOUGLAS, formerly of Winnipeg, Canada.—He is a photographer by trade. His brother and sister are anxious to hear from him, and will greatly appreciate any information. Please write to Henry Vaux Potter, South Sudbury, Mass., or to Mrs. John Hale, 161 Harvard Ave., Montreal, Canada.

J. H. S.—Your mother could not help me, and she died on February 18, 1925. My sisters have helped me, but now they refuse to do so any longer. You had better go to an attorney in Canada and arrange matters. The affair could be settled for two hundred dollars. I need you, and want to hear from you. Please write to Grace, care of this magazine.

ROY.—Please write at once, as I'm very unhappy. I want to come to you, so please let me know where you are. Your heartbroken wife, Ida, 1021 Tower Ave., Superior, Wis.

STEVENS, MYRTLE and JOHN.—I was born in Wichita, Kan., on August 8, 1896. I was placed in an Orphans' Home in Wichita, Kan., and adopted by Mr. and Mrs. John Bales, on April 26, 1897. My mother's maiden name was Myrtle Robison Any information will be gratefully received by Hobert McKinley Stevens, Andover, Kan.

CARSON, GEORGE WILLIAM.—In August, 1920, he left his home to go to the West. He is five feet eight inches in height, has dark-brown eyes and hair, and a piece broken off from one of his front teeth. His mother is most anxious to find him, and will greatly appreciate any information. Please write to Mrs. G. Carson, care of Mrs. Carey, 1913 St. Clair Ave., West Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

SANDS, Mrs. DORA MYERS.—Her maiden name was Pair. She is thirty-eight years of age, has black hair and eyes. She has a son by the name of Brutus Sands, and in March, 1924, they were living at 1101 South 6th St., St. Louis, Mo. Information will be appreciated by Mrs. Sarah J. Kelly, Box 116, Durant, Okla.

ATTENTION.—I would like to get in touch with former buddies, who belonged to the 312th Cavalry, Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming, or 60th Field Artillery, Camp Jackson, Columbia, S. C. I will be glad to receive letters from all of them. Please write Joe McCain, care of this magazine.

MARIE K.—I saw your advertisement for me. I need your help, and I wish I could see you, or hear from you at once Please write to Bill Bates, 613 67th Ave, West Allis, Wis.

WILBY, GEORGE T.—He is about sixty-five years of age. He was on his way to Texas from New Orleans, La., in 1921, and is thought to be operating mines in Mexico, or oil wells in Texas at this time. It is very important that he should communicate with his relatives at once. Any one who can give information as to his whereabouts will confer a favor by doing so. Please write to L. G. W., care of this magazine.

HOSHAW.—He was born February 4, 1904, at Sioux City, Iowa, and was placed in the boys' and girls' home, where he lived for three years. He was then taken from the home by some people. Any one knowing people by the name of Hoshaw will confer a great favor by writing to William Watkins, Company A, 3d Infantry, Fort Snelling, Minn.

SCHAEFER, W. P.—He was last heard from in Richmond, Texas. He is asked to write to his father. Dad, care of this magazine.

MACK.—Daddy is with Mayer & Company, 409 7th St., Northwest, Washington, District of Columbia. Mother is much worried about you. Please write or come home. Clarice K., Washington, District of Columbia.

WILL W.—Please send your address to Theodore.

WILSON, GUSTAVE A.—You need not fear any trouble of any sort. Nothing matters if you will only come home. Please remember that you are more than welcome in my home. Write to your brother Andy, 1 Continental Court, Glen Cove, Long Island, N. Y.

DIEHL, GUY C.—The children and I are living at an orphans' home. We love you, and long for your return. We are at a loss to understand why you left us. Please write your wife, V. A. D., care of this magazine.

DAY, JAMES M.—He is forty-one years of age, five feet eleven inches in height, has blond hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and ninety pounds. He was born in St. Johns, Newfoundland, but was last seen in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1903. Any news will be appreciated by A. M. Day, 1268 Park Ave., New York City.

HOWELL, TOM and LEE.—Lee was in Blair, California, and Tom was on his way to Bisbee, Ariz. They have been away from home for sixteen years. Their mother is very anxious to hear from them, and will be extremely grateful for any information. Please write to Mrs. D. J. Howell, Whitesboro, Okla., or E. V. Howell, Box 192, Maxahachie, Texas.

CRAIG, ETHAN L.—He is twenty years of age, six feet in height, has brown hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and sixty pounds. On February 27, 1925, he was in the office of the Taylor Lumber Company, at Shawnee, Okla. Later he was in Cromwell, Okla., and left there in a Ford coupe with a man from Texas, who has the reputation of being a crook. Information will be appreciated by his aunt, Mrs. G. I. Bowman, Box 831, Cromwell, Okla.

SWINIMER, GORDON ROY—He is thirty-two years of age, five feet eight inches in height, and has a fair complexion. He was born at Gold River, Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia. Two years ago he was living in Viewfield, Saskatchewan, Canada. His family has moved from Gold River, Nova Scotia, to Salem, Mass., and they are very anxious to get in touch with him. He is asked to write to his father, Edward Swinehamer, 36½ Hancock St., Salem, Mass.

FOGARTY or THILL, AGNES.—She came from Glasgow, Scotland, in 1913, at the age of six years. She has auburn-colored hair. She was living in Remsen, Iowa, several years ago. Information as to her present address will be greatly appreciated by her brother J. F., care of this magazine.

CALL, STELLA, formerly of Dayton, Ohio.—She is asked to write to her old friend, who is anxious to hear from her. Frank Tice, Box 88, Hammondsville, Ohio.

DICK, Mrs. W. T.—She was Agnes Atchison, of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Her friend has news of importance for her, and she is asked to communicate with K. M. N., care of this magazine.

JOYAL, NELL BONNETTE, formerly of Grand Forks, N. Dak. When I was a young child, I was taken from my mother, and the authorities in Minneapolis, Minn., sent me to the Henniper County Home. My father's name is Alexander Joyal, and Benjamin Bonnette is my uncle. I miss my mother terribly, and I earnestly desire to hear from her. I will be most thankful for any news of her. I am her baby, who is now twenty-one years old. Alvina Joyal, 321 Birks Building, Hawaiian Music Studio, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

JULIA.—I am well, and hope that everything is all right with you. Please remember the I. L. W., and be sure to wait for me. If you need help, be sure to let me know at once. Edw.

JAMES, HENRY.—On July 4, 1922, he left Ford Ranch, at Lesen, Ariz., to go to California. He is asked to write to his old pal, J. D. Connors, also to his sister, who is very anxious to get in touch with him. Any one knowing his present whereabouts is asked to please write to Mrs. W. A. Curlee, 406 North Railroad St., Phoenix City, Ala.

BURKE, BUD.—Your mother is sick in bed, and is grieving herself to death over your absence. She longs to hear from you, and if you will write her, it will help her to recover more quickly. If you are in need, she will help you. Howard Svitak, 16 27th Ave., Southeast, Minneapolis, Minn.

GORDON, PETER McKINLEY.—He is thirty-two years of age and five feet eleven inches in height. In 1916 he was in Wilmington, Del. His father is very much worried about him, and he is asked to please write to his brother, Robert McKinley Gordon, 80 Broad St., St. Johns, New Brunswick, Canada.

LUSSIER, ARTHUR.—He is about fifty-two years of age, has iron-gray hair, a smooth face, and a scar on one cheek. He was a woodworker by trade, and had been working in Samoa, Cal., since the fall of 1917, until April, 1921. Prior to that he had been working in Minneapolis, Minn. He expected to buy land in the hills, and go there to live. Any news from him will be greatly appreciated by his sister, Mrs. J. W. Reiter, 209 South Marbrisa Ave., Huntington Park, Cal.

LEE, ROBERT or BOB.—He is thirty-five years old, five feet eleven inches in height, has gray eyes, brown hair, arms heavily tattooed, and weighs one hundred and sixty-five pounds. He may be with a carnival or circus in Texas. It is important that his wife get in touch with him, and she will greatly appreciate any information concerning him. Please write to Mrs. Doris A. Lee, 120 Chestnut St., Rochester, N. Y.

JOHNNY.—P. is dead, and it is very important that mother and I hear from you at once. L. K.

BARRINGTON, RALPH.—Please come home and everything will be forgiven. My sister has been very ill in the hospital. Your wife, Rita.

KITCHEL, JAMES EDWARD.—Any information as to his present whereabouts will be gratefully received by his mother, Mrs. C. Causley, 2426 Mission St., San Francisco, Cal.

CROUSER, PEARL.—She was born near Metz, W. Va. When last heard from she was in Los Angeles, Cal. An old friend is anxious to hear from her. Write to Mrs. Harry Mattox, Care of Brondon McClure, Wooster, Ohio.

GERALD, M.—His mother wishes him to know that everything has been taken care of at home, and she wants to hear from him very much. Won't he please write to her at once? Mrs. G. W. C.

SPEERS, JOHN M.—He was living in Teronto, Ontario, Canada, in 1923. He was a tailor by trade, and worked for the T. Eaton Company for a number of years. His daughter is anxious to get in touch with him, and will appreciate any information regarding his present whereabouts. Please write to Muriel, 418 Actico Building, Oakland, Cal.

WARREN, Mrs. MARGARET.—She is a young widow with two little girls, one of them is five years old, and the other, named Frances, is twenty months old. In April, 1910, she gave birth to a son in Erlanger Hospital, Chattanooga, Tenn. When she left the hospital, she gave the child for adoption to a well-known family, the father, James Warren, a mechanical genius, having died three months before the birth of the child in New York City. A mutual friend kept in touch with the mother's whereabouts for the foster parents for several years, but has lost track of her. The boy will be fifteen years of age in April, 1925, and is extremely anxious to meet and get acquainted with his family. Please write any information to L. H. W., care of this magazine.

BLAND, FRANCIS MARION LISTIS.—He was born in Newport, Ky., in 1834, is five feet nine and one half inches tall, has a dark complexion. On Aug. 15, 1862, he enlisted in Captain Josiah Farrar's Company D, 99th Regiment of Indiana Volunteers, as a private. He was discharged June 18, 1865, at Camp Chase, Ohio. His oath of identity was sworn and subscribed before a justice of the peace, and a clerk of the county court at Vancouver, Wash., on Nov. 5, 1873. He was then living at Pumphrey Landing, Cowlitz County, Wash. He was married to Martha Ellen Pumphrey in 1871, and deserted her and their three children in 1876. Later it was reported that he had been killed in a mine in Oregon. Information regarding him or any of his relatives in Kentucky will be thankfully received by his granddaughter, Mrs. Alfred V. Bery, 1721 Duane St., Astoria, Ore.

RUYLE, L. W.—Let me hear from you. I have a letter for you from your home in the East. I am all alone, and living at the same address. Johonas.

JACKSON, BRUCE M.—He enlisted from Mississippi, in the navy, and served on the U. S. S. "Maumee," in the World War. He was honorably discharged at New Orleans, La., and came home. Later he was married, but he and his wife separated, and he left Texas. His mother wishes him to know that his wife has a divorce, and there is nothing to bother him if he will come home. She also wants him to know that there is a State bonus due him. She is most anxious to hear from him, and will be grateful for any information. Please write to Mrs. Alice Jackson, 2622 West Brooklyn, Dallas, Texas.

DELLAPLAIN, MAX.—He formerly lived in Idaho and in Oregon. He is asked to get in touch with his friend, as there is a matter of importance in which he can assist. Information regarding his present whereabouts will be gratefully received by Samuel Klamon, 810 Boatmen's Bank Building, St. Louis, Mo.

FLEENER, JOHN.—Several years ago he was in Mason City, Iowa. His niece is anxious to hear from him or his family. Lois Fleener, care of this magazine.

FINNEGAN, JOHN.—Fifteen years ago he was in Everett, Wash. His niece would like to hear from him. Lois Fleener, care of this magazine.

BROWN, DEXTER, IRENE, DEXTER S., IDA, and KENNETH, formerly of British Columbia, Canada.—Their respective ages are twenty-five, twenty-three, twenty, and nineteen years. Dexter, my father, was born in Maine, but lived in British Columbia, Canada, until 1912. Four of the children were put in the convent at North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Three years later my father took me and my oldest sister, whose name is Irene, to Ogden, Alberta, Canada, to live with his sister, Mrs. F. Hopkins. Later we went to Radcliff, Alberta, Canada. I'm very anxious to get in touch with them, and information will be greatly appreciated by Mrs. Mina May Garfield, 429 8th Ave., East, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

HENDRICKSON, Sergeant AL.—He was formerly of the 157th Infantry, but later transferred to 101st Infantry. His home was in South Portland, Maine, until a year ago, when he went to France. Two buddies of Company D, 157th Infantry, are seeking him. They need him badly, since their long sieges in government hospitals. It will mean much to these boys to find him, and they implore any one, who knows his present whereabouts, to please notify them at once. William Stowell and Cozy Dolan, care of this magazine. Please send your address to the magazine.

COPLEY or COPPLY, ANGELINE CARPENTER.—I was born in Gainesville, Texas, in 1863. My father, whose name was Amos Copley, was killed by Indians in 1866. My mother later married a man named Key, and I went to live with my grandmother, who moved to Korell County, Texas. Any information will be gratefully received, as I am very anxious to find my mother. Please write to Stephen A. D. Copley, General Delivery, Brady, Texas.

ATTENTION.—On December 25, 1885, I was born at the Skinner Hotel, at Vinita, Okla. My mother was an Indian woman, whose name was Mary Bushyhead, the only child of an Indian chief. My father was a white man. I would like to know the address of people by the name of Pattan, at White Oak, Okla., who may be able to help me in my search for my mother. Any information will be gratefully received by Mrs. J. J. Beene, 4817 McGee St., Kansas City, Mo.

BRADSHAW, ROBERT.—He was a miner in Carterville, Mo., in 1919. He has a wife and one little girl. Any one knowing his present whereabouts please notify Private Jonathan C. Marks, Service Company, 19th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, Honolulu, Hawaii.

JOYNER.—Forty years ago my brother learned some information, in Chestnut, Hertfordshire, England, regarding our family history, which may help to reunite members of the family, living in Australia and the Southern part of the United States. During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, one of the Joyner men bought parts of an old man-of-war in London, England, and took them to Oxfordshire, England, where he erected a water mill. Later the family broke up and some of them went to Virginia, United States of America, and bought a plantation. I am anxious to get in touch with them, and will appreciate any information. Write to F. Joyner, 347 Oxford St., Paddington, New South Wales, Australia.

DALY, Mrs. SUSIE.—She is my oldest sister. In 1879 I left my home in Milan, Missouri, and later I met my sister and her husband in Colorado, when they were on their way to Oregon. I haven't heard from them since. Any information will be greatly appreciated by Joseph W. Stevens, Box 1443, Philipsburg, Mont.

STEPHENS, WASH, ABE, TOM, MARTHA, and MARY. My brother Tom liked to travel about from place to place. I'm very anxious to find my family, and any information will be welcomed by Joseph W. Stephens, Box 1443, Philipsburg, Mon.

ROGERS, Mrs. JAMES, formerly Miss Amanda Sears, of Red Willow, Alberta, Canada. Five years ago she was in Lewistown, Mont. She is asked to write to her old school chum, who used to be Agnes Boorhees, now Mrs. E. Le Riche, Box 31, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada.

COGGINS, ANNIE.—She is a sister of Lloyd R. Coggins, a returned United States soldier, of Camp Halibird, Md. She lived in Edmonton, Ky., but four years ago she went to California or Texas to join her brother. Any one knowing her present whereabouts will confer a favor by writing to Mrs. E. Le Riche, Box 31, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, Canada.

BROWN, GERTRUDE.—In 1920 she lived on First St., Flint, Mich. She was taken to the hospital by Charlie Walker, and later she was taken to Peacock, Mich., by her stepfather, Mr. Horton. Since that time she went West and lived at 1330 Margo St., Los Angeles, Cal., for a while. She is asked to write to a dear friend, who is most anxious to find her. Charlie Walker, Merritt Apartments, 740 Crocker St., Los Angeles, Cal.

BISHA, DAISY, formerly from New York.—She was a dancing partner of mine, and a friend of my family. It is thought she may be in Italy or Roumania, or possibly with some Eastern circuit in New York. Any information will be appreciated by Charlie Walker, Merritt Apartments, 740 Crocker St., Los Angeles, Cal.

C. J. S.—Chesley, please write to me at the old address as soon as you see this. A.

SMITH, Mrs. GOLDEN.—She was living in Decatur, Ill., with her husband, who was a painter. She formerly lived in St. Louis, Mo., and knew me as "Texas," when I was a bronco rider in the circus. I wish her to know that I have received word from little Jim, in Columbus, Ind. Please send any information to Charlie Walker, Merritt Apartments, 740 Crocker St., Los Angeles, Cal.

McCULLEY, CHARLES A.—In 1918 he was with the Fifty-fourth Artillery, stationed at Fort Williams and Fort McKinley, Portland, Maine. His last known address was Conran, Missouri. Any information regarding his present address will be appreciated by an old friend, B. K. W., care of this magazine.

MAY, DEXTER.—He is fifty-four years of age, has gray eyes and brown hair. He is known as Dick or Deck, and is a carpenter by trade. His sister is very anxious to find him, as one of his relatives has died. Information will be welcomed by Mrs. Ida May Green, Box 340A, R. 2, Monroe, Washington.

SIMMONS, CLARENCE M.—He was last heard from at Joplin, Missouri. He is asked to please write to his old pal, Eber Hedden, Exeter, Ontario, Canada.

CROWLEY, SHORTY.—We worked together in the Texas oil fields, at Burke-Burnette. I left him in Taseosa, Texas. I am very anxious to hear from him, and shall be glad for any informations as to his present whereabouts. Write to Dick, care of this magazine.

HUTCHERSON, HUBERT and HERBERT.—Hubert is about forty years of age. Twenty-six years ago they were in Salt Lake City, Utah. Their uncle Emile D. Pittman would be glad to hear from them. Information regarding their present address will be gratefully received by Kathleen M. Pittman, Star Route, Greenville, Alabama.

CULLWELL, GRACE, formerly of 10½ Fifth Street, Kansas City, Missouri. Any one knowing her whereabouts will confer a favor by writing W. A. C., care of this magazine.

RAYE, EARL P.—He is nineteen years of age, five feet five inches in height, has brown hair, blue-gray eyes, and a scar over his left eye. In May, 1922, he left Albany, Georgia, and later he was in Washington, District of Columbia. Any information will be gratefully received by his sister, Ethel Raye, Thomasville, Georgia.

BERRY, JACK F.—He is six feet in height, of slender build, has dark hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, and a scar on the right side of his face. Last October he was in Contact, Nevada. It is important that his father get in touch with him, and any information will be appreciated. Arthur Berry, 301 East C Street, Pueblo, California.

WATTS, THEODORE.—He is forty-five years of age, five feet eight inches in height, has black eyes, and black curly hair. About ten years ago he was in Spokane, Washington. His mother is old and alone, and is most anxious to see him. She asks him or any one knowing him to please write her. Mrs. E. Watts, Sonoma County, Annapolis, California.

H.—I will give the trunk keys to R., so that he can deliver them. I have found a nice place to stay, with no expense. I am writing to S. I wish you all luck. Marigold.

STAHL, DOROTHY.—She is thought to be somewhere in Texas. Any one knowing her address will confer a favor by writing to A. J. P., care of this magazine.

AUER, PAUL MARTIN.—I have searched every place for you. I am still waiting for you to return as you promised. Please come home to your wife. Nancy Auer, 2717 Parker Avenue, Norfolk, Virginia.

MACK.—Daddy is with Mayer & Company, 409 Seventh Street, Northwest, Washington, District of Columbia. Mother is much worried about you. Please write or come home. Clarice K., Washington, District of Columbia.

DAY, JAMES M.—He is forty-one years of age, five feet eleven inches in height, has blond hair, blue eyes, and weighs one hundred and ninety pounds. He was born in St. Johns, Newfoundland, but was last seen in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1903. Any news will be appreciated by A. M. Day, 1268 Park Avenue, New York City.

VALENTINE, JOHN HOWARD.—He is about eighty-two years old, six feet tall. In 1869 he, his wife, and daughter left Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and took up a homestead in Kansas. He had a sister Ellen, and two brothers, Joe and Davis. Any information regarding him will be thankfully received by M. V. Hazell, Delaware County, Norwood, Pennsylvania.

DIEHL, GUY C.—The children and I are living at an orphans' home. We love you and long for your return. We are at a loss to understand why you left us. Please write your wife, V. A. D., care of this magazine.

WILSON, GUSTAVE A.—You need not fear any trouble of any sort. Nothing matters if you will come home. Please remember that you are more than welcome in my home. Write to your brother Andy, 1 Continental Court, Glen Cove, Long Island.

J. R. Head, of Kansas, who lives in a small town of 631 people. He has made as high as $69.50 in one day selling Comer All-Weather Top Coats and Rain Coats.

E. A. Sweet, an electrical engineer, is making $600 to $1,200 a month and works only about four hours a day.

W. S. Cooper, of Ohio, who finds it easy to earn over $500 a month selling Comer All-Weather Top Coats and Rain Coats.

Will You Give Me a Chance to Pay You $100 a Week?

I want to make you an offer whereby you can earn from $100 to $1,000 a month cash. You can be your own boss. You can work just as many hours a day as you please. You can start when you want to and quit when you want to. You don't need experience and you get your money in cash every day when you earn it.

These Are Facts

Does that sound too good to be true? If it does, then let me tell you what J. R. Head did in a small town in Kansas. Head lives in a town of 631 people. He was sick, broke, out of a job. He accepted my offer. I gave him the same chance I am now offering you. At this new work he has made as high as $69.50 for one day's work. If that isn't enough, then let me tell you about E. A. Sweet of Michigan. He was an electrical engineer and didn't know anything about selling. In his first month's spare time he earned $243. Inside of six months he was making between $600 and $1,200 a month. W. J. McCrary is another man I want to tell you about. His regular job paid him $2 a day, but this wonderful new work has enabled him to make $16,800 in three years. Yes, and right this very minute you are being offered the same proposition that has made these men so successful. Do you want it? Do you want to earn $40.00 a day?

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Well, here is your chance to find out, for this is the same proposition that enabled George Garon to make a clear profit of $40 in his first day's work—the same proposition that gave R. W. Krieger $20 net profit in a half hour. It is the same opportunity that gave A. B. Spencer $625 cash for one month's spare time. I need 500 men and women, and I need them right away. If you mail the coupon at the bottom of this ad I will show you the easiest, simplest plan for making money that you ever heard of. If you are interested in increasing your income from $100 to $1,000 a month and can devote all your time or only an hour or so a day to my proposition write your name down below, cut out the coupon and mail it to me at once. You take no risk, and this may be the one outstanding opportunity of your life to earn more money than you ever thought possible.

Find Out NOW

Remember, it doesn't cost you a penny. You don't agree to anything, and you will have a chance without waiting—without delay and without investment—to go right out and make big money. Do it. Don't wait. Mail the coupon now.

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In addition to your big earnings we offer you a Dodge Touring Car without a cent of cost, that you can use to help you in developing this great business. Mail the coupon NOW.

Mail This Special Coupon Now

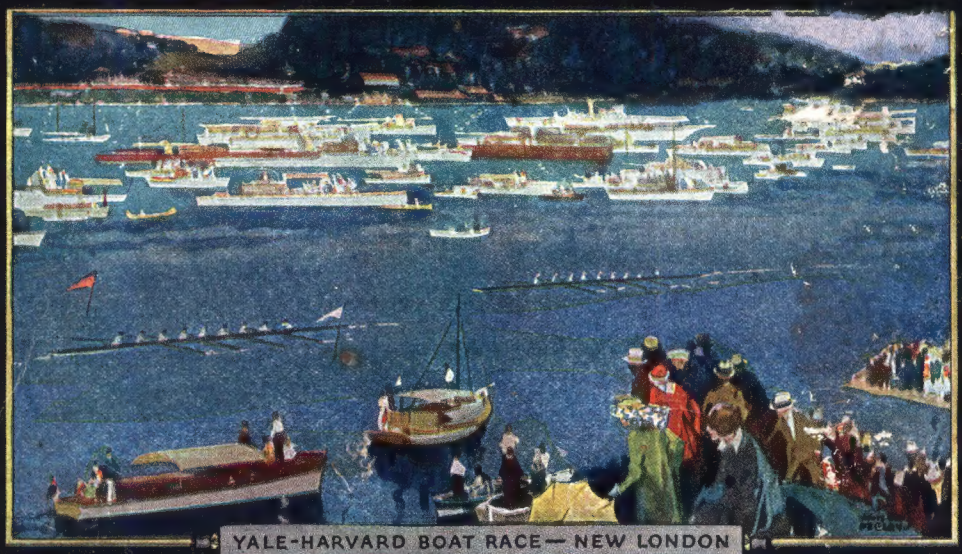
The Comer Mfg. Co.,
Dept. 46-J, Dayton, Ohio.

Please tell me, without obligation or cost on my part, how I can increase my income from $100 to $1,000 a month as your representative and earn a Dodge Touring Car.

Name .....

Address .....

(Print or write plainly)



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